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# **A Social Constructionist Approach to Female Entrepreneurs' Media Representation and Experiences in Saudi Arabia**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in Media and Communication

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## List of Abbreviations

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)
The National Development Plan (NDP)
The Saudi Broadcasting Authority (SBA)
The Saudi Broadcasting Corporation (SBC)
Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC)
The Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development (SMLSD)
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)
Higher Education (HE)
Middle Eastern and North African region (MENA)



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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is the candidate's own work and I confirm that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the ways in which Saudi women entrepreneurs are socially constructed in Saudi Arabian media by deploying a social constructionist epistemology. Drawing upon Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this thesis examines the discursive apparatuses through which the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is forged. It also explores the contextual factors, such as the political, socio-economic and socio-cultural milieu, in addition to endogenous ones, affecting the representation and entrepreneurial practices of Saudi women entrepreneurs through qualitative in-depth interviews. Building on the extant literature, I challenge the ubiquitous entrepreneurship conceptualisations and discourses, and especially the Western, white, male entrepreneur, by shedding light onto Saudi women's entrepreneurial experiences in Saudi Arabia. The findings unveil the ideological paradoxes and shifting power relations that are embedded within, and underpin, the representation and experiences of Saudi female entrepreneurs. These paradoxes, arguably, are a manifestation of the current socio-economic reforms in KSA amalgamating conventional, religious and nationalist values with a neo-liberalist and (state) capitalist structure. Such juxtapositions produce conformist narratives and counternarratives to the Western entrepreneur, as seen through this study's analysis. The findings reveal that there are Saudi discourses that chime with Western constructions of the entrepreneur such that of the individualistic, heroic and successful entrepreneur. However, there are other Saudi discourses on entrepreneurship that counter the Western entrepreneur as a rags-to-riches iconoclast and rather, offer elitist ascriptions instead. Another presumption that underpins the Saudi discourses is that although the Saudi women entrepreneurs are celebrated for their achievements, they are, in some instances, immanently essentialised to their new roles. Such complexities encapsulating the discourses of entrepreneurship are not merely a manifestation of the changing milieu and gender relations in Saudi Arabia, but also the malleable and fluid conceptualisation of entrepreneurship theories and practices. From a pragmatic stance, the thesis is concerned with advancing the knowledge on the entrepreneurial practices of Saudi females by understanding the contextual and institutional factors at play that affect their business endeavours. From a conceptual stance, it is concerned with widening the participants of the field to expand our understanding of entrepreneurship theory and practice.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The socio-cultural normalisation of concepts such as “woman” and the academic fields around entrepreneurship, both vital for my study, renders what is perceived as true or false about being, for instance, a female entrepreneur and what kinds of “adequate” policies, practices or ascriptions might go along with them. For certain groups, these norms are deemed as taken-for-granted knowledge and an objective view of their realities is established, and some of these groups are researched in this project. This could accordingly manipulate certain phenomena, groups of people and experiences when discussing female entrepreneurship, for example, and is a crucial issue for my research. The concept of female entrepreneurship requires that some of the central tenets of social constructionism be addressed given its profound influence on numerous fields such as sociology, psychology and the humanities. A social constructionist approach can, for example, unveil how audiences, consumers and citizens, in Saudi Arabia in particular, conceptualise female entrepreneurs through their social interactions and enable discussion of its impact on their endeavours and representations. It is, therefore, imperative to improve our understandings of these interactions through a framework that explores multiple dimensions of social construction. In a sense, a social constructionist approach can help us gain insights, challenge institutionalised barriers and develop the research on female entrepreneurship through expanding possibilities for introducing new concepts and theories and, hence, new methodological approaches.

Social constructionism is predominantly concerned with how individuals construct their worlds with elements supplied by social relationships (Fletcher, 2006). That is, the crucial emphasis is not merely on individuals’ cognitive processing, but also, equal attention is given to how norms or socio-cultural practices shape this. Social constructionists are thus concerned with the ways in which individuals’ cognitive processes are mediated through social and cultural, or discursive practices, that enable entrepreneurial opportunities and behaviours (Anderson, 2000; Chell, 2000 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.426). This thesis acknowledges the field’s different constructions even in its Western context, where the concept arguably emerged, by including, for

instance, different genders, social classes, ethnic and racial groups and different educational backgrounds. The conversation about entrepreneurship gravitated from industrial to non-industrial contexts, art, social and cultural entrepreneurship, campaigning and activism; it even moved beyond entrepreneurship as a means to earn profits (i.e. corporate social responsibility). The question is then, can this occur in KSA in a post-oil economy? More importantly, and even before moving beyond profit-making, what version of entrepreneurship is being adopted in Saudi Arabia? Do the Saudi discourses chime with the already established Western notions of entrepreneurship, or do they alter them? In other words, does Western imperialism have a vital role in shaping entrepreneurship discourses in KSA? Although there are no fixed and universal definitions of entrepreneurship, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, there are established defining features around which there is consensus (from Western scholars), which is what renders entrepreneurship, paradoxically, a social construct as well as endowing it with ontological status. This thesis, then, contributes to its social construction by widening its participants and societies. To achieve the latter, I acknowledged the necessity to first make intelligible the extent to which Saudi discourses are applying the already established Western discourses of entrepreneurship or redefining them. How do they perpetuate or challenge Western discourses? What are the main or counternarratives of, specifically, female entrepreneurship in Saudi discourses?

Shedding light onto female entrepreneurs in an Eastern, conventional, religious and patriarchal yet reforming structure,<sup>1</sup> that is of Saudi Arabia, contributes to expanding the conceptions and discourses revolving around entrepreneurship by drawing upon a social constructionist epistemology. Indeed, there can be a multiplicity of entrepreneurial discourses and various ways of performing them that do not necessarily resonate with the endemic discourses. This study also concerns itself with conceptions revolving around gender and “femininity” and the ways in which they are situational, relational and hence socially and historically constituted. In that, the concept of both *woman* and *entrepreneur* can vary depending on contextual and

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<sup>1</sup> These reforms are not devoid of controversy especially from Western perspectives. See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/06/its-a-free-country-now-saudi-arabia-touts-new-openness> and <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/12/the-instagram-influencers-hired-to-rehabilitate-saudi-arabias-image>, (Accessed 20/04/2020).

historical factors similar to how Saudi women's socio-cultural and socio-economic positionality, throughout the gradually shifting Saudi cultural history, have changed. Through exploring the ways in which female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia is socially constructed (conceived, enacted and reproduced) by both Saudi traditional media (a selection of magazines) and Saudi women's everyday entrepreneurial practices (through a series of interviews), I was able to uncover and explore these narratives. There is, however, prevalent rhetoric on Saudi women, even until recently, which depicts them, especially in the Western mass media, as oppressed, subjugated and confined within their contexts. It can be, then, challenging for the West to believe that Saudi women entrepreneurs can be "truly" entrepreneurial due to Saudi political system, paternal law, and most significantly, the lack of freedom. Surely, one might argue that a Saudi female entrepreneur is a contradiction in terms of the autonomous entrepreneur, and yet my study shows them to be real and agentic. The ubiquitous Western narrative on entrepreneurship concerns itself with individual sovereignty (imagined as male), financial, political and socio-cultural freedom, as well as the freedom to experiment and innovate. It is also about decreased structural rules (liberal democracy), looser regulations and freedom from familial and institutional constraints to strike out into novel business ideas/sectors while creating social, cultural and human values. Entrepreneurship is also about failure. There has to be freedom to fail and it not matter and not cost too much. Entrepreneurship is about being disruptive and resistant to do new and useful things and having the continued freedom to do so. Therefore, how much freedom do Saudi women entrepreneurs really have? Who can afford to have that freedom and who gets to self-identify as a woman entrepreneur? How enabled, socially, culturally or economically do the women need to be and how far can my research challenge the accepted understandings of entrepreneurship?

It is less recognised in the Western media that many Saudi women entrepreneurs have achieved national and international recognition for their business endeavours in Saudi Arabia. The exponential exposure in the Eastern media of these Saudi businesswomen and entrepreneurs is a manifestation of the liberalising efforts by the Saudi State through the recently initiated Vision 2030 in 2016 by Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. Vision 2030, or the National Development Plan (NDP), is the Kingdom's

long-term strategy for economic and social reform.<sup>2</sup> It sets to, among other things, increase non-oil revenue, create new jobs and expand women's roles in the workforce. The vision is based on three main pillars: a thriving economy, a vibrant society and an ambitious nation that are to be in effect throughout all governmental bodies based on their sectors.<sup>3</sup> The more notable reform, and of interest to this study, concerns women's socio-economic positions within the country, which saw an increase in their labour force participation, as delineated in Chapter 2. The changes in policies such as the driving ban lift and the male guardianship<sup>4</sup> enabled the mobility and participation of more Saudi women. Nevertheless, and as this study will later reveal, only certain Saudi women are being celebrated and portrayed in the chosen media samples. On a broad level, it seems that only a specific type of woman benefits from such reforms as per the analysis. Not only this but the changing policies that encourage women to be entrepreneurs and increase their socio-economic participation, in general, are top-down approaches. When we look at examples of other countries such as the UK, with a more democratic socio-economic fabric, we can find the most globally renowned entrepreneurs such as Sir Richard Branson, Deborah Meaden and Sir James Dyson. In that, good entrepreneurial ideas, arguably, usually do not stem from top-down structures or initiatives as they are too controlling and directive<sup>5</sup>, which can raise speculations as to how entrepreneurial Saudi women can be.

With this in mind, and with the adoption of Foucault's conceptions of discourse and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, I realised that the representation of Saudi female entrepreneurs is far from objective and instead, is imbued with a socio-political and a socio-economic agenda. That is, in the representation of specific types of Saudi

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<sup>2</sup> This was reported to be temporarily disrupted due to measures to mitigate the outbreak of Covid-19 and falling oil prices. See for example: (<https://www.meed.com/covid-19-disrupts-riyadhs-vision-2030>), (<https://www.euromoney.com/article/b1kwsyr21vw5qs/saudi-arabias-vision-2030-faces-its-biggest-test>) and (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gcc/publication/saudi-arabia-economic-update-april-2020>). The country however has been taking extreme measures from the outset to reduce the spread of the virus, see for example: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/27/saudi-arabia-clear-response-to-the-coronavirus-outbreak-is-in-stark-contrast-to-west-view>, (Accessed 08/04/2020).

<sup>3</sup> The National Character Enrichment Programme aims at fostering a sense of national belonging and the values rooted within the country's heritage. It focuses on strengthening Saudi youth's values, through enhanced policies, of entrepreneurship, determination, tolerance, generosity and optimism.

<sup>4</sup> The male guardianship law stipulated that a male family member (e.g. father, brother or husband) governs almost every aspect of a Saudi woman's life from marriage, work, travel, education to obtaining a passport. Now, after the loosening of the law, it is only applicable on minors.

<sup>5</sup> China can be a caveat with its strong governmental controls but produced entrepreneurs such as Ali Baba's Jack Ma and others.

female entrepreneurs, the overarching success stories and the types of barriers they incur, or lack thereof, there are underlying assumptions about female entrepreneurship and on Saudi Arabia in general. As such, these representations contribute to socially constructing Saudi female entrepreneurship. My thesis analysed the discourses that encapsulate female entrepreneurship in KSA while raising questions such as: what is entrepreneurship? Who is an entrepreneur? Who can become an entrepreneur? What are the necessary traits that encapsulate an entrepreneur? Are certain Saudi women “real” entrepreneurs, or is it a guise for self-employment or family employment? Other questions that came to mind are: who benefits from the current representations of Saudi female entrepreneurs? And more significantly, who constructs such portrayals?

I am aware that there is consensus in the extant literature on entrepreneurship that operates as a substrate to conceive and make cogent entrepreneurship; some of which I explore in my research to gauge my findings against. Yet again, these denote an ontological status to entrepreneurship by stating what entrepreneurship is or who can be an entrepreneur. It might not be evident that these definitions or conceptual frameworks are socially constructed through power, language, discourse and indeed discursive strategies that are, then, perpetuated through entrepreneurs’ practices, media or academic researches such as the current one. In turn, these forged and reinforced understandings of entrepreneurship can be rendered as inevitably accurate and subsequently marginalise many people with them while circulating widely. Most of the early literature framing entrepreneurship is based upon men’s experiences, which designates it difficult to extrapolate such presuppositions upon women’s entrepreneurial experiences let alone women in a non-Western environment that is of Saudi Arabia.

The considerable amount of attention in literature given to male business owners infers that female entrepreneurs are made invisible, and their issues are being translated into a social phenomenon. Previous literature assumed entrepreneurship to be a male activity (Brush, 1992; Berg, 1997 cited in Carter and Marlow, 2007 p.11) and most of the literature on women and entrepreneurship did not address the consequences of adapting entrepreneurship frameworks, which were developed via analyses of men’s lives, on females (Carter and Marlow, 2007). Women thus constituted a marginalised group in entrepreneurship (Delmar and Davidsson, 2000). Women are positioned as



“others”, and the feminine is being problematised (Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio, 2004 cited in Marlow and Swail, 2013 p.81) within the field of entrepreneurship due to prevailing entrepreneurial discourses that are embedded within and upon masculinity (Ahl 2006; Ahl and Marlow, 2012 cited in Marlow and Swail, 2013 p.81). In so doing, men are being privileged by normatively positioning essential entrepreneurial attributes as masculine, and thus creating a hierarchical order where women are positioned as lacking (Marlow and McAdam, 2013 cited in Marlow and Swail, 2013 p.81). In other words, within the entrepreneurial field, women are positioned within a deficit model and become the embodiment of the gendered subject that portrays masculinity as the default norm. This normalisation appears natural and inevitable as a consequence of inequalities in power and status that are manifest in social orders. These structural influences place women in socio-economic spaces (Marlow and Swail, 2013), which in turn, hamper or work against their entrepreneurial endeavours. Cranny-Francis et al. (2003 p.2 cited in Carter and Marlow, 2007 p.24) stated: “the male side of the equation is generally coded as the positive one and so becomes the standard by which all others are judged, in effect it becomes the norm.”

In a more recent study, Marlow, Hicks and Treanor (2019) assert that gender ascriptions impact entrepreneurial activity. Despite the assumptions of gender neutrality associated with entrepreneurship, the literature on female entrepreneurship positions women as second-sex entrepreneurs through tacit gender suppositions that operate as a mechanism of dominance (Marlow et al., 2019). Men are thus rendered as natural entrepreneurs that, in turn, privileges masculinity (Ahl, 2006; Ahl and Marlow, 2012 cited in Marlow et al., 2019). Drawing upon Bruni et al. (2004), Marlow et al. (2019) highlight that when female entrepreneurs are theorised, an androcentric entrepreneur mentality is reproduced, and masculinity thus becomes invisible. Male entrepreneurship then assumes the normative position by which gender divergence is measured. Further, the gendered assumptions construct the white heterosexual male as a typified and exemplar entrepreneur while remaining under-theorised, then men are afforded legitimacy, privilege and visibility by their gender (Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2017). Although analysing the impact of gender on women’s entrepreneurial behaviours have unveiled the embedded hegemonic forms of masculinity within the entrepreneurship discourse, Marlow and Martinez Dy (2017) offer a critique on the positioning of women as the proxy (i.e. representation) of gender while also deeming

gender a simple and one-dimensional construct with limited iterations. Although this can be deemed as radical within a highly conservative context such as KSA where gender roles are predominantly constrained within the duality of a man and a woman, there is indeed a need for an expansion of understanding the multiplicity of gender performance (see Butler, 1986; 1990) and, as the latter authors assert, for a more sophisticated engagement with gender within the entrepreneurship discourse. What is more of concern to this study, which is articulated precisely by Marlow and Martinez Dy, is that when taking women as the proxy of the gendered subject, there is a risk in creating “women entrepreneurship” as a niche discipline through which they can become removed from context while also leaving the normative masculine version of the entrepreneur unquestioned by creating a parallel “feminine” discourse (Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2017). The above arguments map a vital starting point to examine and sketch out the entrepreneurial experiences and media representations of Saudi women entrepreneurs and explore the presuppositions around entrepreneurship in Saudi media discourses.

Conventional presuppositions of entrepreneurship designate it as an integral component for the progression and disruption of an economy (Schumpeter, 1934) as it manifests its significance by, for instance, identifying and exploiting business opportunities, creating new firms or reinventing existing ones and progressing the economy through invention and innovation (Cuervo et al., 2007). Supplementing the “Westernisation” of the field, the term “entrepreneur” was argued to be derived from the French word “entreprendre”, which means to undertake (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.3) to manage and assume the risks of a business. Entrepreneurs display personal initiative, an ability to consolidate resources, a desire for autonomy, managerial competencies, “aggressive” competitiveness and risk bearing capacities. These all suggest gendered attributes that are rarely ascribed to female entrepreneurs (e.g. see Ahl, 2002). Jones and Spicer (2009) challenge presumptions upon which mainstream understandings of entrepreneurship rest, highlight the ambiguities and nuances in deploying the term and criticise the mythic heroic entrepreneur valorised in business, academia and mass media. In Saudi Arabia, it seems that anyone can be

an entrepreneur by virtue of having a novel idea or merely owning a business.<sup>6</sup>

However, and as this study will later reveal, the notion does not seem inclusive as to encompass everyone with entrepreneurial capabilities and especially women from underprivileged backgrounds. It also predominantly excludes failing instances, and therefore, the overarching rhetoric is of a positive and successful experience. Unfortunately, the extant literature on Saudi female entrepreneurship does not explore in detail or question these dominant presuppositions about entrepreneurship and the underlying political, economic or socio-cultural bases on which, for instance, some representations of Saudi female entrepreneurs reside. In that, many research articles do not address the politics ascribed to who becomes an entrepreneur or who is portrayed as an entrepreneur. The literature on Saudi women entrepreneurs predominantly focuses on barriers and enablers to female entrepreneurship in KSA (discussed in Chapter 2). This thesis will proffer some answers to the unasked questions and gaps in the previous literature. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, my research draws upon Jones' and Spicer's work in that it aims to question the presumptions embedded in the representation of Saudi women entrepreneurs in Saudi traditional media. It makes intelligible the ways in which exogenous factors such as the socio-cultural, socio-economic and political milieu affect the social construction of Saudi female entrepreneurship. The thesis also contributes to the academic conversation that seeks to further expand our understandings of a seemingly taken for granted phenomenon such as entrepreneurship.

Further, studies revolving around Saudi female entrepreneurs in KSA rarely address the impact that the Saudi political structure have upon Saudi women entrepreneurs. The country was rendered as a "patrimonial capitalist" economy (Schlumberger 2004; 2008 cited in Adham, 2018 p.15) and the respective structures are embedded in neo-patriarchal societies in which males dominate females and younger males (Charles, 1993 cited in Adham, 2018 p.15). Schlumberger (2008, p. 235 cited in Adham, 2018 p.35) developed the framework of patrimonial capitalism utilising the notion of neo-patriarchy and posited that the power structure in Arab countries, such as that of Saudi

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<sup>6</sup> Echoing this statement is Interviewee 11 who I shall be focusing on in a later chapter, who stated: "when we talk about entrepreneurs, is it everybody? Because this is what it means in Saudi Arabia: anybody who has an idea and they start-up, whether you have funding from your parents, whether you have no funding, whether you are part of an incubator, it's all entrepreneurs."

Arabia, is the “logical” consequences of a personalised system of political rule and a patriarchal social fabric. Max Weber (1922 cited in Go, 2015) elucidates that the logic of patrimonialism is in familial relationships, which is of high significance in KSA. It also encompasses a family-like set of social responsibilities reciprocated between a ruler controlling the resources (the patrimony) and dependents who seek to benefit from these resources. Weber (1922 cited in Go, 2015 p.10) adopted the concept of patrimonialism to explore political systems in which rulers provide for their dependents on the basis of kinship-ties and self-interest but by exerting power to maintain the patrimonial regime. Patrimonial capitalism, in particular, was coined by Piketty (2014) who argues that it is an inheritance-based capitalism in which the economic elites retain their wealth through inheritance rather than entrepreneurship or innovation. The inherited wealth produces a class of rentiers who are placed into the top 1 percent (Milanovic, 2014) and thus dominate politics. Saudi Arabia, deemed as a rentier economy, depends on oil rent and its distribution through informal and formal institutions (See Adham, 2018). The concept of patrimonial capitalism is of relevance to the current study as it is in contention with the liberal market economies, found mostly in Western economic contexts, in which entrepreneurship activity is most likely embedded. Also, the elitist ascriptions of patrimonial capitalism resonate with the study’s findings in terms of who gets to be represented as an entrepreneur, discussed later in Chapter 10. This also infers the paradoxical economic structure existing within the country that is also explained in Chapter 10 (see Figure 2). The dominance of a patrimonial capitalist regime raises questions on whether it can attain its vision’s economic agenda of, particularly, promoting entrepreneurial activity, or conversely having an entirely opposite effect. Further, there is a lack of studies investigating the impact that traditional Saudi media<sup>7</sup> may have upon the endeavours of women entrepreneurs in the country. Saudi media is of concern to this study as it has transformed drastically, due to changing media policies<sup>8</sup>, over the generations and especially with regards to women’s media participation and representation.

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<sup>7</sup> The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century marked the proliferation of satellite TV; 97 percent of Saudi residents owned satellite “dishes” (Fadaak and Roberts, 2019). The two terrestrial Saudi channels, Saudi One and Saudi Two aired news and entertainment. Even before the re-introduction of cinemas in 2018 in KSA, Saudis produced films for both national and international TV and online dissemination (Fadaak and Roberts, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Despite apparent increases in Saudi women’s engagement in Saudi traditional media, the Saudi Ministry of Media website did not update its media policies published approximately 38 years ago.

The depiction of women in Saudi mass media had come a long way since the days when women's faces were blurred in outdoor media. Perhaps even more strikingly, men's eyes were blurred in more conservative regions. In 2009, Saudi clerics condemned the State and called for banning and prohibiting women from appearing on TV and print media as it is a sign, as they deemed it, of "deviant thought" (Rahbani, 2010). They also condemned the increase of music and dancing on TV in a letter directed to the then Information Minister Abdulaziz Khoja (Rahbani, 2010). At that time, Saudi female journalists were not permitted to attend press conferences, a daily struggle expressed by Sabria Jawhar, who was the Editor-in-Chief of the Saudi Gazette (Rahbani, 2010). This is not striking given the industry, even women's magazines, were predominantly run by men. It is also reported that Saudi women journalists were compelled to write using an alias or to merely use their first and father's name without stating the surname to avoid harassment from people who consider it a shame to publish a woman's name in print media.

Sakr (2008) argues that contradictions immanent in confining Saudi women creates space for renegotiating their personal and political position in the country, and Saudi media can shed light on such negotiation as analysis of media institutions highlight the situated nature of legal and social constraints on Saudi women. Sakr's main objective was to assess how Saudi women's personal and political status have been renegotiated through the media; their visibility in the media does not necessarily reflect their status in other areas of public life, which echoes my objective in unravelling the latter. She argues that there are two paradoxical sets of evidence: the first infers an exponential increase in women's appearance in the Saudi media between 2004 and 2006 and the second implies that despite such increased visibility, there is minimal change with regards to women's status in media and especially in journalism. Sakr (2009) posits that the portrayal of women is charged with contradictions; there are varying degrees of women's images across all types of programmes on Saudi channels such as MBC, Rotana, Al-Majd and so on. Such divergences, however, in portraying women, as Sakr averred, leads to a broader scope of interpretations; the depictions can be assessed in terms of the extent of diversity rather than evaluating them as either how "pro" or "anti" women they are. The scope of reference points also increases for discourses around women's issues and positionality when there is a diversity of narratives.

Changes in policy took effect when the Saudi government realised the rapid pace of media advancements and thus, in 2018, incumbent King Salman issued a Royal Decree to separate media from the Ministry of Culture and Information to establish the Ministry of Media that oversees all media-related policies and matters.<sup>9</sup> The Saudi Broadcasting Authority (SBA), formerly the Saudi Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), is a state-run establishment under the Ministry of Media that operates most of the domestic broadcasting outlets. The government owns public media and is a significant market for pan-Arab satellite and pay-TV such as Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), based in Dubai, which was launched in London after the Gulf War in 1991. Saudi investors are vital players in the pan-Arab TV industry; they are behind UAE-based TV stations such as MBC and OSN (BBC, 2019). Most Saudi Arabian newspapers are privately owned (BBC, 2019) as well as most magazines (Boyd and Shatzer, 1993). The Press and Publications Law, established in the 2000s, governs the content and circulation of both print and electronic materials (ADHRB, 2015; BBC, 2019). The country operates an extremely governed media environment; criticising the Royal Family and the State or blasphemy (publicly questioning Islamic tenets) is prohibited and leads to legal ramifications. Indeed, media censorship is a common practice in KSA; journalists are under close scrutiny over any political criticism or analysis about the Saudi State. Media content, especially online and social media, of a sexual nature entailing pornography, nudity or homosexuality in addition to messages that entice terrorist thinking or behaviour are blocked.<sup>10</sup> Self-censorship is also a common practice among Saudi citizens using social media with one example that prompts such censorship and governance by both the Saudi State and citizens is the peaceful movement carried out by activist Manal Al-Sharif.<sup>11</sup> Such an event, and others, caused international organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, to position the country under extreme criticism. With this lack of media freedom, the 2019 World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), ranked the country three scores down to 172 out of 180 countries. Vision 2030, and especially

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Saudi Ministry of Media, the first newspaper, *Umm Al Qura*, was established in the era of King Abdulaziz Al Saud (1876-1953) to be the official medium to disseminate royal decisions.

<sup>10</sup> Article 39 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: “Mass media and all other vehicles of expression shall employ civil and polite language, contribute towards the education of the nation and strengthen unity. It is prohibited to commit acts leading to disorder and division, affecting the security of the state and its public relations, or undermining human dignity and rights. Details shall be specified in the Law.” See: <https://www.saudiembassy.net/basic-law-governance>, (Accessed 09/12/2018).

<sup>11</sup> Manal filmed herself driving in the Eastern city Al Khobar in 2011 and uploaded the video on YouTube and Facebook to start the right-to-drive campaign.

with its women's rights agenda, could not have, arguably, occurred at a better epoch under such developments in the country's international political position. With this in mind and with the controversial and paradoxical state at which the country resides, the analysis of media discourses of Saudi female entrepreneurs in light of these events can reveal the workings of discourse, discursive apparatuses and social construction at their best.

It is then significant to explore the meaning of discourse and the workings of power in shaping these. Foucault's oeuvre (1970a; 1970b; 1977; 1980; 1988; 1989; 1994a and 1994b) and theoretical conceptions of power and discourse, and their enmeshment with knowledge, are integral for my critical examination of Saudi media discourses. The caveat, however, similar to any adopted theory within this study, that Foucault is a Western European thinker who was concerned with a particular social and cultural moment to investigate institutional power. His work rarely concerns media but has been widely applied in media and cultural studies. Therefore, the close engagement with Foucault's notion of discourse and power can yield significant insights on power relations imbued within the Saudi media discourses that construct conceptions and practices around "womanhood" as well as entrepreneurship. In a sense, Foucault's work enables a critique of the available discourses and the ways through which these were formed in understanding the power dynamics within a society. The pertinence of the concepts of power and discourse to the media domain is then highlighted by drawing upon those who have adapted his ideas, such as van Dijk, Hobbs and O'Keeffe. Some of the limitations of the existing literature are discussed predominantly in terms of the employment and development of Foucault's work in the media domain as seemingly it is not yet well established in media and communications research. In particular, there is a considerable gap in the literature regarding the Saudi media discourses' role in shaping or socially constructing the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship through their representation, and whether Foucault's concept of discursive power is applicable. While Foucault has introduced other various pivotal concepts and his edifice of work is widely employed in numerous fields such as politics, social psychology, philosophy, history, business and education, the current study will adopt the concepts of power and discourse for framing the analysis of female entrepreneurship in Saudi media discourses.

Discourse is not merely representational, but it constitutes and creates what is being represented. Saudi women entrepreneurs can borrow from existing discourses, including media, to shape their entrepreneurial identities, which is why it is necessary to make them intelligible. Discourse is referred to as a set of rules and mechanisms for the production of certain discourses (Mills, 1997 p.62); it is also a set of systematic practices that forge the objects of which they speak (Foucault 1972 p.49 cited in Mills, 1997 p.17). Discourses are not merely a group of signs and utterances grouped around a topic or theme; rather, they are a highly regulated group of utterances with intrinsic rules which are specific to discourse itself (Mills, 1997 p.48). For the context of the respective study, discourse refers to both the language used in the sampled study and the practices involved in shaping the discourse of female entrepreneurship in KSA. It is also concerned with the creation of knowledge (e.g. about entrepreneurship) through representation and language and the ways in which knowledge is institutionalised, forging social conducts and shaping new practices into play (Ainsworth, 2001).

Discourses also govern the content of knowledge as they constitute rules of classification, inclusion and exclusion, in addition to rules that determine who can make knowledge claims, concerning which domain, and under what circumstances (Letseka and Pitsoe, 2013).<sup>12</sup> They also have the potential to create and define true and false statements. Discourses also incorporate the knowledge that is embodied in and stem from language (speech and writing), practices such as routines, habits, conversations (or, for instance, entrepreneurial behaviours) and material objects such as books, art and architecture (Evans, 1993 p.11 cited in Morrow, 1995 p.17). They are also immanent in the very physical layout of institutions such as law courts, schools, hospitals, churches, homes (Letseka and Pitsoe, 2013) and business organisations, for example. It is, then, necessary to explore the discourses and discursive mechanisms through which Saudi female entrepreneurship is selected, produced and thus socially constructed via institutions and practices.

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<sup>12</sup> These rules are predominantly Foucault's main unit of analysis as he was concerned with how discourses have changed over the years, played a vital role in shaping and creating meaning systems that have gained the status of "truth" and dominate how we conceptualise and organise ourselves and our social world.



With this in mind, the ensuing are the main objectives framing the current research:

- a.** Analysing the context of and barriers to female entrepreneurship in KSA (e.g. gender, political, economic, cultural and social).
- b.** Examining the media representations of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabian print and online magazines.
- c.** Investigating female entrepreneurs' conceptions and enactment of entrepreneurship in light of the media portrayals.
- d.** Exploring the strategies that female entrepreneurs adopt to navigate through the identified barriers.

Chapter 2, Female Labour Market Force and Entrepreneurship in KSA, delineates the gender gap in the Saudi labour market with an emphasis on Saudi women's employment and unemployment. The chapter also provides general trends in entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia while discussing structural factors affecting Saudi women's business endeavours. A further delineation of the Saudi political and economic context is presented in Appendix A.

Chapter 3, The Elusiveness of Entrepreneurship, provides a critical review of the prevalent theories of entrepreneurship and discusses the meaning of an entrepreneur, and its various types, in the extant literature to enable situating the sampled Saudi female entrepreneurs against the explored endemic entrepreneurship discourses. The chapter then highlights the cultural constructions framing entrepreneurship discourses that tend to valorise specific types of entrepreneurship characteristics and behaviours that can marginalise other forms of enacting or perceiving the field.

Chapter 4, The Power of Media: Social Constructionism for Understanding Entrepreneurship Discourse, proceeds with expanding our understanding of entrepreneurship from social constructionist epistemology and its application in entrepreneurship research. The chapter then delves into the representation of female entrepreneurs in media discourses on entrepreneurship that are characterised by the dominance of stereotypes and male experiences. The second part of the chapter discusses the implications of media representations on the construction of social reality and their power in forging entrepreneurial "realities".

Chapter 5, Exploring Feminist Theories in Entrepreneurship Studies, explores the concepts of feminist epistemologies and ontologies and their application within a Saudi cultural context that is characterised by its conventional - religious context, which is currently, under the policy reforms, concerned with Saudi women's rights and liberation. The chapter then presents a review of the literature on the different feminist theories (e.g. empiricist, standpoint and constructionism) to expand our approaches and understanding of gender and entrepreneurship studies. The final section of the chapter discusses everyday Saudi reality from a feminist lens and its implications on women's entrepreneurial conceptualisations and practices.

The first part of Chapter 6, Methodology - A Social Constructionist Approach to Female Entrepreneurship, conducts a critical review of the approaches espoused to study entrepreneurship in general, gender and female entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurs in a national context, in specific. I then explore previous literature researching women's depictions in magazines since my thesis concerns itself with the representation of Saudi women entrepreneurs in magazines. The second part of the chapter outlines the research methodology that provides a philosophical underpinning for the chosen methods adopted in this study (which are a Critical Discourse Analysis and in-depth interviews) and the research sample.

Chapter 7, The Representation of Saudi Women Entrepreneurs in Saudi Magazines - A Critical Discourse Analysis, is an empirical chapter that delves into the chosen magazines and examines the discursive practices through which Saudi women entrepreneurs are being discursively constructed. In particular, the chapter deploys an adaptation of Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis to place the texts and respective constructions of Saudi female entrepreneurship in the wider socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic milieus. It also discusses the embedded underlying ideologies and power relations that affect Saudi women entrepreneurs' practices. These are summarised into themes that frame the overall construction of Saudi female entrepreneurs in the analysed magazines.

Chapter 8 and 9 supplement Chapter 7 by presenting the empirical findings of the interview data. They illustrate the insights obtained from the sampled women's entrepreneurial experiences that showcase the ways in which entrepreneurship, as both a concept and a field, either perpetuates or deviates from the common understandings of it. Chapter 9 is particularly significant as it discusses the types of barriers incurred by the female participants and subsequent strategies to navigate the entrepreneurial arena.

Chapter 10, Discussion Chapter – The Paradoxes of Female Entrepreneurship in KSA, coalesces the findings of the magazines' analysis with the obtained interview data into main themes and examines the magazines' depictions in relations to the sampled women's experiences. Chapter 11 concludes by discussing the main theoretical and empirical contributions, implications for the literature and the *macro level* of the Critical Discourse Analysis by extrapolating the research data onto some of Vision 2030's agenda.

## **Chapter 2: Female Labour Market Force and Entrepreneurship in KSA**

### **2.1. Introduction**

One of the main objectives of the respective study is to unveil the factors that impact the social construction of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia as either enabling or hampering women's entrepreneurial ventures. To make the latter more intelligible, a delineation of the contemporary Saudi Arabian context (see Appendix A) is imperative for the current study. Throughout this chapter, I will focus on the gender gap in the Saudi labour market with an emphasis on exploring the reasons for Saudi women's employment and unemployment. This chapter also discusses general trends and statistics in entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia, which is vital in light of the country's economic reforms that can have implications on the labour market and entrepreneurial ventures.

### **2.2. The Saudi Female Workforce: Explaining the Gender Gap in Employment**

The issue of female unemployment was recognised in one of Vision 2030's goals, which aims to increase female labour participation to 30 percent by 2030. Despite the low levels of Saudi female employment rates<sup>13</sup>, Saudi Arabia was recognised as the fastest-growing market force engagement rate of all the G20 countries (Mulligan, 2019). Explaining this low level of participation is that Saudi women, similar to their male counterparts, opted to work in governmental sectors or jobs in education while rejecting private sector employment opportunities (Burton, 2016). Due to Saudi women choosing to be teachers, there has been in turn a saturation of eligible teachers and the lack of Saudi women prepared for the business and entrepreneurship arena (Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Minkus-McKenna, 2009; Yamani, 1996 cited in Basaffar, Niehm, and Bosselman, 2018). Not only the latter, but there was a ban, based on legal and socio-cultural constraints, on women working in the retail sector as the mixing of the sexes on commercial grounds was prohibited for decades. This prohibition limited career options for Saudi women; they could work in all-girls schools or health and

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<sup>13</sup> 25.9 percent depicts the Saudi female labour force participation rate (GASTAT, 2020).

social welfare professions in which intermingling with men is minimal (Al-Asfour et al., 2017 cited in Basaffar, Niehm, and Bosselman, 2018). To increase Saudi female employment rates, the State lifted this ban through what was deemed the “Feminisation Program” and opened up job opportunities in the retail sector for women to work in places such as supermarkets, lingerie shops, accessories and jewellery boutiques (Burton, 2016). To encourage private sectors to hire Saudi women, the State imposed fines and penalties, such as not renewing foreign workers visas, for women-related shops that do not have female-only floor staff.

Another reason for why Saudi women remained outside the economic realm is that their roles are predominantly constrained to the domestic sphere as wives and mothers despite holding 40 percent of the national private wealth, 40 percent of real estate assets, 70 percent of the liquid capital and more than \$13 billion in local bank accounts (Almunajjed, 2006 cited in Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013). Saudi women also account for approximately 60 percent of the total enrolment at the university level (Basaffar, Niehm, and Bosselman, 2018). There still, however, remains a considerable gap between Saudi female university graduates and the women entering the workforce and especially in the entrepreneurial arena (Basaffar, Niehm, and Bosselman, 2018). This represents a lack of return on the State’s investment in women’s education. According to the Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development (SMLSD) (2016), there exist two reasons for this high unemployment and low participation rates among women. First, Saudi females tend to focus on skills that are not demanded by the private sector despite the women’s high qualifications. Mulligan (2019) explains that it is often noted that Saudi males tend to concentrate on engineering studies that equip them with many transferable skills while females specialise in humanities, which help explain why Saudi women find it harder to meet the labour market demands. The lack of work opportunities for women-graduates discourages them from entering the labour market and thus creates an eventual detachment that persists throughout their working lifecycle (Mulligan, 2019). It is however reported that Saudi women are currently outnumbering their male counterparts in graduating in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See for example, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1469381/saudi-arabia>, (Accessed 07/05/2020).

The second reason for women's high unemployment rates, especially in the private sector, is the flexible working hours, more women-friendly environments and the higher investment in infrastructure by the public sectors that incline women to favour them over private ones (SMLSD, 2016). Other challenges that affected women's labour participation include conventional workspaces that are not designed to accommodate women. That is, companies had to invest in separate workspaces for women, which not all can afford. Also, some jobs that require direct interaction with men is not preferred by many women due to socio-cultural (and sometimes explained as religious) reasons. Transportation and lack of day-cares also play a crucial role in hindering women's participation in the labour market (SMLSD, 2016).

The efforts made by the Ministry to enhance women's economic participation are not in their embryonic stages, rather, they stem from official policies introduced in 1970, such as the *Saudization* system (see Appendix A 4.1) that aims at increasing the Saudi labour force in the private sector. The State also provided ameliorated opportunities for Saudi women to obtain career-relevant skills (Arebi, 1994; Berger, 1989; Gakure, 1995 cited in Basaffar, Niehm, and Bosselman, 2018) and have opened up separate branches of governmental agencies and banks to employ Saudi women (Minkus-McKenna, 2009). In 2008, women were given the right to open businesses without a related male represented in their establishments. With these implemented policy changes, Saudi women began to open micro-businesses and adopted social media platforms to operate their businesses. A further delineation of policies and initiatives that aim at facilitating Saudis' economic engagement is represented in Appendix A.

### **2.3. Entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia<sup>15</sup>**

One of the most integral strategies that enabled economic diversification is promoting an entrepreneurial mindset among the Saudi population and creating policies

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<sup>15</sup> In the GEM 2018/2019 report, Saudi Arabia contributed in closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship activity that globally narrowed to 2 percent. KSA was also among the countries with the highest rates for women with positive capability perceptions. However, Saudi Arabia has very low rates of business ownership for both women and men, below 4 percent; of whom are younger women establishing businesses. According to the GEM (2016), women in Saudi Arabia are more likely to perceive the country as more competitive and more favourable towards entrepreneurship as a career choice than do men; and are more inclined to think that businesses in KSA are aimed at solving social issues.

conducive to promoting entrepreneurial activity, as in Vision 2030. Creating an entrepreneurial culture in KSA is indeed a vital priority for national public policy given that there are endeavours to gravitate away from crude oil dependence and to provide more employment opportunities to the burgeoning young population (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013). The Saudi population is estimated at 31.7 million with approximately 20 million Saudis (GEM, 2016), and 67 percent of this population is estimated to be under the age of 34. Furthermore, entrepreneurship was deemed not only as instrumental for balanced economic growth in KSA, but also contributes to efficient resource adoption, creating more employment opportunities and developing a self-sufficient society (Yusuf and Albanawi, 2016). Other authors, (e.g. Faria et al., 2010; Hamod, 2010; Kayed and Hassan, 2013) cited by Yusuf and Albanawi (2016), supplement that entrepreneurship is a catalyst for economic expansion within the country and has promoted productive activities in all spheres of the Saudi economy. There is also growing recognition by both the private and public sectors that the growth of the entrepreneurial class should be a vital constituent of any economic development plan that pertains to the Kingdom (Burton, 2016). Disseminating an entrepreneurial spirit, and specifically amongst university graduates, can alleviate the unemployment rates affecting younger generation in addition to contributing to the economic diversification, growth and innovation sought by the Kingdom (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013).

In addition to economic growth and diversification, numerous economic advancements within KSA are attributed to entrepreneurial activity and in specific to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the country. Job creation is one of the effects, which accounts for thirty-five thousand job vacancies annually (Yusuf and Albanawi, 2016). As a result, there is an improvement in living standards and purchasing power.<sup>16</sup> The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate and subsequent productivity within the country are also attributed to increased entrepreneurial engagement (Yusuf and Albanawi, 2016). Other pivotal results yielded by entrepreneurs in KSA is the increase in innovation that consequently ameliorated technologies utilised in producing quality goods and services, and hence the creation

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<sup>16</sup> Consider also resource and wealth distribution. Previously, it was only urban areas such as the capital of KSA that reaped the benefits of entrepreneurship due to most of the well-established companies refraining from rural areas fearing incurred losses (Yusuf and Albanawi, 2016). The Ministry of Labour and Social Development supports young entrepreneurs in rural areas and aims to minimise the imbalances created in wealth and resource distribution.

of new markets (Yusuf and Albanawi, 2016).<sup>17</sup> Another positive aspect is that entrepreneurship functions as a source of government revenue through, for instance, increased scales of production and levied taxes on the locally produced goods and services as they enter the market.

With regards to Saudi female entrepreneurship<sup>18</sup>, it has become a State priority now that it recognised its significance for strengthening both the family unit and economy (Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018). There have been, in turn, several governmental initiatives<sup>19</sup> supporting female entrepreneurship within the country such as the King Abdulaziz Women's Charity Association's Al-Barakah Loan Centre (Saudi Gazette, 2010), which finances women's initial business expenses (Al Masah Capital Limited, 2010; Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018) and the Centennial Fund that also offers financial aid to young Saudi entrepreneurs, both males and females (Al Masah Capital Limited, 2010; Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018). Few women, nonetheless, have seized the advantage of such opportunities (Alturki and Braswell, 2010 cited in Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018). Alessa (2013) supplements that Saudi female entrepreneurs do not take advantage of initiatives or programs tailored towards them, and in many instances, some women do not have access to these as compared to male entrepreneurs. In the past few years, however, it became easier for women to enter the economic realm and more specifically, the labour market (Alturki and Braswell, 2010 cited in Alessa, 2013).<sup>20</sup> Zamberi Ahmad (2011) posits that although Saudi women have achieved success in the country, these were with limited resources. The women seem to depend on two business networks: family and external connections such as women's business associations. They also rely on family funding (either from fathers, husbands or other members) who provide them with start-up capital for small-scale business ventures (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011).

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<sup>17</sup> This is reflected in the latest 2018/2019 GEM report, which stated that Saudi Arabia was among the countries in which innovation rates were high.

<sup>18</sup> There are no official statistics on the number of female entrepreneurs in KSA. It has been reported that they reached to 38.6%. See: <https://entrepreneuralarabiya.com/>. but there is no context for this percentage.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix (A. 4) for other State initiatives to increase Saudi's employment opportunities.

<sup>20</sup> In light of recognising women's economic potential, the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry has issued more than six thousand licenses for women to establish their businesses in both Riyadh and Jeddah (Alessa, 2013). There are also forty-three thousand companies owned by women entrepreneurs in KSA, yet there still remain unregistered businesses owned by Saudi female entrepreneurs (Alturki and Braswell, 2010 cited in Alessa, 2013).



## **Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity Motivation**

Some research has found that most of the entrepreneurs in KSA are opportunity-oriented; they seek to pursue an entrepreneurial opportunity based upon their motivation as opposed to out of necessity. Some entrepreneurs engage in entrepreneurial ventures to enhance their situation either through increased income or autonomy. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2016) report illustrated a negligible difference in terms of motivation between Saudi males and females; opportunity was the primary motivation for both groups. Necessity as motivation is less common among women and more prevalent for men, except for in 2010 when necessity entrepreneurship represented 12.2 percent for women. However, the 2018/2019 GEM report states that women in Saudi Arabia are increasingly being categorised as necessity entrepreneurs reaching a rate of 38.9 percent from 5.9 percent. The former motivations are cited as pull factors, which are driven by personal choices and characterised by personal development, such as flexible working schedule, desire for self-autonomy and contributing to society, driving Saudi women's motivations towards self-employment (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011).

Saudi women seek autonomy and recognition through their entrepreneurial endeavours, but also, there exist push (necessity) factors, such as job dissatisfaction, that "push" women towards self-employment (Khan, 2017). Motherhood also plays a vital role in women's decisions to become entrepreneurs. Khan (2017) revealed that Saudi mothers chose self-employment to provide a better future for their families and to "be their boss", in addition to enhancing women's image, being socially acknowledged and employing skills that they have learned. Fallatah (2012) averred that the push factors that motivate her sample of Saudi women to entrepreneurship are self-fulfilment, achievement and market opportunity while family (financial and moral) support in addition to their strong position within Saudi society were deemed as pull factors. Other motivations for Saudi women to self-employment were the expansion in women's education and the growing private sector areas, such as broadcasting and journalism, after the Gulf War in 1991 (Fallatah, 2012).

Almobaireek and Manolova (2013) found that Saudi women are increasingly expressing a desire for innovation and business growth. The Saudi undergraduate students in their sample place a high significance on financial success (as the primary motivation), creativity and obtaining business experience with regards to their entrepreneurial orientation. They are less likely than their male counterparts to establish a business venture for control, achievement and to realise a vision. Young Saudi females are keen on establishing a business for independence reasons (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013). The latter authors report that gender segregation of the Saudi labour market, in addition to women's low labour force participation (high unemployment rates), "push" some women into necessity entrepreneurship. That is, due to the economic as well as the social constraints experienced by some young Saudi women, they will be driven by a smaller range of entrepreneurial motivations in comparison to men. A pull factor that is of achievement was ranked as the second least significant motivation for women. Merely 28 percent of the sampled females believed that entrepreneurship would enable them to gain a prominent social position (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013). In general, the latter authors concluded that young females in university did not believe their entrepreneurial participation would allow them to gain social recognition, achievement or realise their visions. They, conversely, believed that it would be a path towards self-autonomy. This is in contention with Sadi and Al Ghazali's (2010) study that cited self-achievement as the most imperative motivational factor for Saudi businesswomen followed by the desire for self-autonomy. Alessa (2013) suggested that simplicity and running an inexpensive establishment were two of the motivations cited by Saudi women towards self-employment. Other motivational factors included earning a living, self-development, ambition and a gained sense of independence (Alessa, 2013). These findings are vital for this study as they enable exploration of the discrepancies between the mediated (represented) and actual Saudi female's entrepreneurial experiences, which in turn impact their social construction.

### **Challenges to Saudi Women Entrepreneurs**

Recent research has suggested that Saudi women experience difficulties in manoeuvring through or navigating government bureaucracy, conceptualising their business propositions and solving problems, due to gender-specific barriers they incur

daily (Burton, 2016). These gendered issues with regards to the entrepreneurial realm frame the methodological approach of this study. Access to capital, lack of social respect, bureaucratic processes and the lack of business and management skills were reported as the main barriers incurred by Saudi female entrepreneurs (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). Among the most significant issues, in particular, encountered during the start-up phase are finding the pertinent business information, obtaining financial resources and the lack of coordination between government officials or bodies and women's establishments (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). The GEM (2019) reported that Saudi women are more likely than men to cite lack of profitability for business closure. Nieva (2015) avers that women social entrepreneurs are facing challenges with regards to financing, regulatory frameworks and technical support. The main barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in KSA can be summarised into a lack of education, communication skills, management skills and knowledge of Saudi labour law. Complex government policies, managing personal and professional duties simultaneously and finding the right suppliers and organisations for help (Khan, 2017) are other types of impediments. Other than the specificity of the Saudi labour law, one might argue that these barriers are common to many contexts. However, what of the cultural, emotional and symbolic factors that are the focus of my research? In framing these, below are more specific barriers to female entrepreneurship in KSA that my desk-based research has revealed.

### **Socio-cultural Factors**

Various studies depicted that culture plays an imperative role in explicating the divergences and variations in entrepreneurial activity among societies (Zemberi Ahmad, 2011). Socially constructed factors hinder women and render them as struggling more than men when establishing businesses due to socially enforced modes of conducts, customs and laws governing gender interaction (Burton, 2016). These types of social barriers that limit women's interactions inhibit women's entrepreneurial abilities in especially solving business-related problems, which in turn suppresses the stimulation of creativity that is the substrate of an entrepreneurial venture. There are successful women entrepreneurs in KSA despite the conventional cultural norms that have tended to hinder their entrepreneurial engagement (Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018). However, this study will later reveal that their success

is predicated on having certain types of privileges. Further, strict interpretations of Islamic law, in particular, have exerted many constraints upon women's rights and job opportunities (Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018). Although Saudi women have access to high levels of education and have the right to work, they nonetheless do not have the full opportunity to participate in economic life (Almunajjed, 2010 cited in Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013, p.63). They are also confined in their political and social-life participation (Alturki and Braswell, 2010). This could be attributed to the socio-cultural gendered ideologies that permeate the political culture, which is perceived to epitomise women's domesticity and encourages sex segregation (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013, p.63). Even Princess Monira Al Saud, co-founder of the Charity Centre for Social Guidance and Family Consultations in Riyadh, argues that despite women having full social and economic potential, they are not very active due to, most likely, personal or socio-cultural restraints (Almunajjed, 2010 cited in Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013, p.63). Some Saudi females, therefore, may consider entrepreneurship in contention with their gender roles or may doubt that they do have the necessary skills to partake entrepreneurial ventures (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013). Even should they have confidence with their abilities, they might doubt their businesses will yield social recognition (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013), which is most likely due to socially appropriate gender roles and conducts. This is, nevertheless, gradually changing in light of the new policy reforms.

Research has shown that socio-cultural ascriptions permeate Saudi laws on women's work. These laws stipulate that women should work in an appropriate environment and follow their "nature". That is, sex segregation by occupation is prevalent in Saudi Arabia; women are thus embedded in professions that are perceived as feminine and remain in less eminent professions or positions than their male counterparts (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013). The latter can have negative implications upon their entrepreneurial aspirations or endeavours by restricting their interactions or types of professions.<sup>21</sup> Research has also explored how most Arab countries do not deem women as powerful and influential businesswomen due to an ascription of lower social status as compared to male counterparts that subsequently impede women's business growth (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). In particular, Saudi women's agency in choosing her

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<sup>21</sup> 85 percent of all working women are in education (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013).

career is argued to be limited due to social constraints more than legal ones (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). These businesswomen operate within a context that is not gender-neutral but has strong socio-cultural norms, which restrict their mobility and capacity to interact with other people outside their domestic realms, which in turn hinder their achievements (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). The latter argument can be disputed especially in more “socially liberated” contexts such as the city of Jeddah, although it is noteworthy that women in Saudi Arabia are predominantly embedded within a highly conventional milieu. Fallatah (2012) supplemented that Saudi women faced problems regarding traditions and customs, alluded to as “gendered-cultural” issues, and family restrictions stemmed from conventional values that hindered their entrepreneurial endeavours. However, the elite group in Fallatah’s sample did not experience cultural barriers as they were embedded within a business environment in which establishing a business for women is encouraged.

Saudi businesswomen and entrepreneurs exponentially appear on public platforms (primarily through social media), proliferating within Saudi media discourses, including traditional media where they are celebrated for their economic achievements. Why, therefore, there is a cognitive dissonance between constraint and celebration? These types of media representations influence and potentially alter the current perceptions revolving around Saudi women’s socio-cultural and economic positions that are ostensibly shifting under the current regime. However, instead of the lack of social respect towards women, there is lack of approval expressed by many conventional Saudi citizens with regards to the governmental efforts to liberating women and improving their economic and social participation. It is also important to stress that these liberation processes and opportunities are only seized by women who have lesser social constraints than women who still remain in the shadows of their conservative families. These socio-cultural ascriptions and hindrances are extant and can impede many women’s ventures, but they are not widely evident and are hence obscured under other women’s entrepreneurial achievements exposed by the media. On a positive note, there is a change in the Saudi culture in which openness is becoming more evident, and families are increasingly supporting women by not hindering their start-ups (Khan, 2017). Women entrepreneurs have voiced their needs for incubators, training and mentors and for the State to publicise the laws more openly (Khan, 2017), which may have led the country to recognise women’s needs that, if

adhered to, will enable better economic development. Khan (2017) also posits that Saudi society is becoming more accommodating and conducive to women entrepreneurs, in particular, families, friends and society, in general, have had a positive role in encouraging and contributing to female establishments within the country.

Saudi women entrepreneurs also faced other structural issues such as gendered policies that limit women's business activities such as in sports (Fallatah, 2012). However, Saudi women's engagement in sports have increased exponentially since Fallatah's research, and there is no policy that stipulates women cannot establish a business in sports. Women also incurred issues with governmental employees who complicated their business procedures due to their opposition to women in business (Fallatah, 2012). Other reported governmental barriers were the lack of cooperation between its departments and the lengthy time to open-up a business (Fallatah, 2012). As another structural barrier, education was prevalently cited as one of the main barriers to entrepreneurial activity and participation in KSA. However, numerous female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia believe that education plays a vital role in instilling entrepreneurial values and competencies (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). Almobaireek and Manolova (2013) found in their study that the majority (90 percent) of the female undergraduate students in their sample were interested in establishing new business ventures; nevertheless, less than 10 percent had undergone training to develop the necessary skills to partake in an entrepreneurial venture. The lack of sufficient training or knowledge about entrepreneurship can be attributed to the majority of the Saudi institutions' curriculum, which does not incorporate entrepreneurship-related materials (Yusuf and Albanawi, 2016). Not only the latter but also the issue stems from the very core of the Saudi educational system that is perceived as failing to encourage developing students' personal opinions adequately and preferences in knowledge through the memorisation of course materials (Burton, 2016), which can hinder adopting or displaying entrepreneurial-related traits such as self-autonomy and assertiveness. Alessa and Alajmi (2017) supplement that there are studies conducted in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, which suggest that the obstacles with entrepreneurship education in KSA lie in the absence of rewards and incentives that drive creative and innovative thinking amongst students. The challenges also lie in the absence or the lack of professional paths in public education, the tenuous link and

relations between the economic and educational sectors and the absence of business incubators sponsoring entrepreneur students. There is also a lack of generating entrepreneurial ideas, by the Saudi educational institutions, that are ready to be reified into new projects, and lack of a knowledge-base or materials that are essential to partake in entrepreneurial activities (Al Yamani, 2016 cited in Alessa and Alajmi, 2017 p.1159). For a further delineation, Abou-Moghli and Al-Abdallah's (2019) systematic review provides vital insights on Saudi women entrepreneurs' motivations and challenges.

#### **2.4. Opportunities to Develop Entrepreneurship in KSA**

The need to unlock KSA's promising economic sectors and diversifying its economy depends on a new deal with regards to gender and inclusion. There is an aim to leverage opportunities for creating economic value and systems for SMEs and entrepreneurs (GEM, 2016), but it is not clear who the beneficiaries are of these reforms. The government is supporting the establishment and development of SMEs that are among the most significant agents of economic growth as they support innovation, create jobs and boost exports. Discourses around business and women seem to be increasing, as my study will reveal, but in limited sectors, therefore, it is essential to explore how women experience this upsurge. Striving for business-friendly environments, reviewing business laws and regulations, increased access to funding, removing barriers and building international partnerships is also among the Vision's strategy to support SMEs and entrepreneurship.<sup>22</sup> This will benefit men and women within progressive families, but it is still undertheorised how other women from conservative settings benefit from these. Business incubators are established alongside specialised training institutions to encourage entrepreneurs to develop required skills and networks, which will help them attain their ventures' objectives (GEM, 2016). The call for incubators has been answered but there still remains a need to explore their locations and how accessible they are for women. The economic and demographic landscapes in Saudi Arabia have pragmatic implications for both

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<sup>22</sup> In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), The Human Resources Development Fund "Hadaef" provided innovative services remotely to support entrepreneurship and SMEs wishing to expand through the nine-tenth program (see: <https://910ths.sa>).

entrepreneurship and SMEs. Seizing the “youth bulge” towards entrepreneurship will thus make an imperative economic contribution in KSA. At first glance, conditions are affording young Saudi women opportunities to grow their entrepreneurial endeavours but what of the more profound sense of identity for such women in these changing conditions and how should we analyse the symbolic representation of Saudi women as autonomous, successful and risk-taking businesswomen?

## **2.5. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed labour market trends in KSA and focused in particular on the gender gap in the Saudi labour market with an emphasis on Saudi women’s employment and unemployment. The chapter also provided general trends in entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia while discussing structural factors affecting Saudi women’s business endeavours. It was deduced that the socio-cultural realm is the main structural element hindering Saudi women’s entrepreneurial engagements. In particular, cultural norms, family conventions and obsolete perceptions on womanhood deterred women from entering the entrepreneurial arena. The next chapter discusses the conventional definitions of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur, how context, culture in particular, impacts entrepreneurial motivation, and the discourses socially constructing the field of entrepreneurship and its discursive representations.



## Chapter 3: The Elusiveness of Entrepreneurship

### 3.1. Introduction

Understanding the social construction of Saudi female entrepreneurship should be underpinned by exploration as to what constitutes the definition of entrepreneurship or an entrepreneur, which still occupies the academic conversation.<sup>23</sup> I do not, however, attempt to adopt an ontological view<sup>24</sup> to understand entrepreneurship, but to acknowledge its socially constructed “nature” and explore how this construction is deployed in Saudi discourses. What confirms entrepreneurship as a social construct is that there remains debate over its definition (Gartner, 2001; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), which highlights the nuances in conceiving the field. One unique analogy made by Kilby in defining entrepreneurship is to use the story of the characters of *Winnie the Pooh* (1971) who go hunting for the Heffalump. The characters claim to know this creature, but never have they seen one. They all agree that it is a massive creature, but they disagree on its characteristics. Similarly, researchers of entrepreneurship seem to agree upon an understanding, yet there remains a lack of unified conceptualisation as to regard what entrepreneurship is and who entrepreneurs are. In *Hunting the Heffalump* (1971) Kilby argued that entrepreneurship had been perplexing scholars and practitioners for many years. Indeed, there does not seem to be an endemic and agreed-upon conceptualisation of entrepreneurship (see: Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991; Foss and Klein, 2012 cited in Warnecke, 2013 p.456).

However, it would go against the main premise of this research to seek to find a universal definition of entrepreneurship or an entrepreneur, as my thesis explores a

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<sup>23</sup> This is particularly timely as Marlow argues that the call for policy changes to enhance women entrepreneurship assumes they are underperforming but the bigger picture is neglected. There are labour market gender inequalities that render women entrepreneurs as often focused in crowded low valued service sectors, work part time and from home, which affect the profitability of their businesses. Simultaneously, my thesis highlights the labour market inequalities that privilege the elite in terms of access and opportunity. That is, the concept of entrepreneurship is being contested by Marlow and my thesis from different ends of the inequality spectrum, from low value work and from privilege, elitism and access, respectively. See: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/women-enterprise.aspx>, (Accessed July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> That is, I do not believe nor aim to explore an underlying essence of entrepreneurial activity.

social constructionist epistemology, which in effect, counters an ontological approach to entrepreneurship. In that, it does not recognise an underlying “truth” or essence as to regard the *nature* of an entrepreneurial activity nor an essential property shaping an entrepreneur. However, it is necessary to lay-out the fundamental or prevalent theories of entrepreneurship to enable an augmented conceptual framework of entrepreneurship that can, arguably, be more inclusive by exploring the entrepreneurial discourses and practices of Saudi female entrepreneurs. A review of the literature on entrepreneurship is hence crucial as a starting point to make the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship (in a patriarchal and conservative but shifting context) more intelligible.

As entrepreneurship involves individuals’ behaviours, cognitive processes and interactions within specific environments (e.g. socio-economic contexts), approaching it from a social constructionist view does not merely provide theoretical understandings, but also practical implications to the field as it invites us to step outside the mainstream economic view of entrepreneurship. The value of this review then resides in suggesting surpassing the conventional (while proposing new) ways of conceiving entrepreneurship, particularly around limiting notions of what women are capable of, the sectors they succeed in and the means/resources by which they achieve success. Also, and before a proposition can be made, a review on the meaning of entrepreneurship and an entrepreneur enables this study to situate the sampled Saudi female entrepreneurs and examine how they resonate with the quintessential conceptions and representations of an entrepreneur in media representations explored in this thesis. In what follows, I provide definitions of entrepreneurship and an entrepreneur from the extant literature, then proceed to discuss the different types of entrepreneurs. The last part is devoted to a meta stance on entrepreneurship that questions the conventional conceptualisation of the field, which opens the way for cultural understandings.

### **3.2. What Is Entrepreneurship?**

The lack of agreed-upon conceptualisations (Gartner, 1989) results in problems identifying the object of study (Venkataraman, 1997), and leads to a sample of entrepreneurs that are hardly homogenous (Markku, 2002) and a lack of robust

entrepreneurship frameworks (Bygrave, 1989). Perhaps the search for homogeneity is the main problem as it aims to forge entrepreneurs with an underlying essence through which other potential entrepreneurs, such as females, are gauged against. The fragmentation of conceptualisations can be attributed to the contribution of the diverse entrepreneurship scholars with divergent disciplinary backgrounds such as finance, history, education, science, psychology and anthropology (Bull and Willard, 1993). However, the genesis of entrepreneurial thought was argued to be in economics (Zimmerman, 2009) and more specifically in classical thinking of economics and is intended to be expanded from my approach from media and cultural studies.

Formal theories of entrepreneurship found their first expression in the work of Richard Cantillon, *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général* (1755 cited in Long, 1983 p.48), who defined entrepreneurship as undertaking self-employment of any sort, and that an entrepreneur is someone who is not hired nor working for wages (Long, 1983 p.48). For Cantillon, an entrepreneur is “someone who exercises business judgment in the face of uncertainty” (Herbert and Link, 1989) and entrepreneurship operates at the heart of a market economy. Other scholars were also influential in defining entrepreneurship. Some of which are identified in Herbert and Link’s (1989) review in which they delineated the three intellectual traditions influencing and expanding the entrepreneurship literature. Audretsch recognises these as the Austrian Tradition based on von Mises, Shackle and Kirzner; the German Tradition based on Schumpeter and von Thunen and the Chicago Tradition, which is based on Schultz and Knight (Audretsch, 2003). Schumpeter (1934), for instance, who will be discussed later in this chapter, deemed entrepreneurship as one of the factors of production; and for Drucker (1985), entrepreneurship is an act of innovation that encompasses endowing existing resources with the capacity to produce new wealth.

In more contemporary discourses, entrepreneurship<sup>25</sup> is seen as an integral component for the progression of an economy as it manifests its significance in numerous ways: by identifying and exploiting business opportunities, creating new firms or reinventing existing ones, progressing the economy through invention and innovation and by

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<sup>25</sup> Entrepreneurship is: The application of energy to initiating and building an enterprise. The vision requires a willingness to take calculated risks (both personal and financial) and then to do everything possible to reduce the chances of failure (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992).

improving the well-being of society (Cuervo et al., 2007). From a basic premise, entrepreneurship is doing things that are not generally done in the ordinary course of business routines; it is thus a humanly creative act. It encompasses more than what entrepreneurs do (Dodd and Anderson, 2007 cited in Mole and Ram, 2012 p.4), as it constitutes the circumstances that facilitate the starting of business for entrepreneurs. There is an agreement that in entrepreneurship there is a kind of behaviour that includes “initiative-taking, the organising and reorganising of social economic mechanisms to turn resources and situations to practical account, and the acceptance of risk of failure” (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.5). From a contemporary view, entrepreneurship is innovation and new venture-creation through four vital dimensions. Namely, individual, environmental, organisational, and processes that are aided by collaborative networks in education, institutions, and government (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.27). It also covers the interaction between the environment, the venture, and the entrepreneur (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.8). That is, we should examine the environment in which the entrepreneurial firm operates against the latter variables.<sup>26</sup> Such an overview is essential to demonstrate the nuances and fluidity in conceiving entrepreneurship, which supports my initial stance in adopting a social constructionist lens. It is also useful to gauge these understandings against how entrepreneurship is conceived and portrayed in Saudi discourses.

### **3.3. Context, Culture and Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is deemed as a dynamic, complex and multifaceted social construct that is performed in many contexts by different actors (Leitch et al, 2009 as cited in Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017 p.268) and as embedded in, and shaped by, socio-cultural dynamics (context). Context is therefore key to understanding entrepreneurial activity and behaviour. However, the significance of context and its influence on entrepreneurial activity remains invisible (Marlow, 2014) or elusive as our understandings are shaped by dominant paradigms that obscure the complexity of the social and place (Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017). Indeed, “entrepreneurship” is always relational and thus the connections between people, places and processes help explain

<sup>26</sup> The Saudi government’s “spurring” of an entrepreneurial spirit, the changing socio-cultural milieu, Saudi women’s inclinations to work, and the roles media, banks, incubators and universities play, enable creation of entrepreneurial activities. The latter, however, infers an oversimplification while disregarding the power dynamics at play in Saudi Arabia that enable certain women’s economic engagement.

entrepreneurship (Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017). There is thus a need to analyse entrepreneurial activity within each unique context to understand the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur and the significance of the field within each context (Wynn and Jones, 2019). In specific, analysing market, institutional and organisational (as well as socio-cultural, economic and political) contexts can make intelligible how entrepreneurial judgments and decisions are made, as these are in turn influenced by contextual factors (Patriotta and Siegel, 2019). In that, the judgements of entrepreneurs are impacted by market and institutional factors that do not merely provide resources, but also influence the ways in which these resources are construed (Patriotta and Siegel, 2019). Marlow (2014 p.6) highlights the importance of understanding context by arguing:

Contextualisation can generate competing, alternative explanations of the same phenomenon, spurring researchers to study it in greater depth and identify key contingencies that influence their form and effect.

As a contextual factor, the influence of culture on entrepreneurship has also received increasing attention in the literature (Mitchell et al., 2002). Osowska et al. (2016) state that there are studies that illustrate the link between national culture and entrepreneurial motivation and suggest that entrepreneurs who are motivated by independence and growth prosper in cultures where social ties are significant. Yet, such studies and their implications reflect the “reality” revolving around male entrepreneurship (Delmar and Davidsson, 2000 cited in Osowska et al., 2016). Davidsson (1995) also avers that culture, structure and entrepreneurship are at an interplay and what is significant is the interpretation of such an interaction.<sup>27</sup> More specifically, social conducts and values affect individuals’ choices to become entrepreneurs (Osowska et al., 2016). Arenius and Minniti (2005) argue that women entrepreneurs experience an inextricable interaction between structural and agency elements. Subjective and biased perceptions about entrepreneurship informed by the exogenous structural environment, for instance, are deemed to be positively correlated with a person’s inclination to start a venture (ibid). Foreman-Peck and Zhou (2014) suggest that endemic social values and beliefs impact one’s intention to take on entrepreneurial careers; nevertheless, such decisions are based upon opportunity and intention.

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<sup>27</sup> Structure for Davidsson (1995) is deemed as the pull and push elements that impact a new firm’s entry into the market. When pull factors are consequently favourable, the culture seems to be conducive to entrepreneurial practices.

Cultural norms also impact gender role and stereotypes, in turn, they dictate certain occupations (including entrepreneurship) deemed as apt for both men and women (Mueller 2004; Shinnar et al., 2012 cited in Foreman-Peck and Zhou, 2014). Women's choices of entrepreneurship are thus linked with gender ascriptions, which can be forms of institutional demarcation (Fischer et al., 1993; Marlow and Patton 2005; Gupta et al., 2009 cited in Foreman-Peck and Zhou, 2014). Socialisation processes can then make the differences between men and women in terms of choosing entrepreneurial careers more intelligible due to different values that ascribe different roles to both genders. Rubio-Bañón and Esteban-Lloret (2016) argue that understanding the national culture is vital to assess how each country values entrepreneurial behaviours. Countries that position women as belonging to the domestic setting regard men as the ideal group to start a business venture (Bird and Brush, 2002) while women navigate structural barriers to exploit business opportunities. The latter infers the Hegemonic Masculinity theory (Connell, 2005) that suggest gender role biases position men and women in a society based upon ideologies and discourses that valorise the male figure, and thus impacts their entrepreneurial career choices.

### **3.4. Who is an Entrepreneur?**

The term “entrepreneur” is derived from the French word “entreprendre”, which means to undertake (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.3). Entrepreneurs “undertake” to manage, organise, and assume the risks of a business. They are innovators and developers who recognise and seize business opportunities; convert those opportunities to marketable (applicable) ideas; add value through effort, time, skills, or capital; assume risks of rivalry marketplaces to implement the new business ideas and realise the rewards from these efforts (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.3). They are deemed as catalysts and agents of change within a business context. They are also conceived as individuals who exercise business judgement in the face of uncertainty (that is, they exhibit a considerable low-level of uncertainty aversion), marshal all significant resources to create and market products, perceive profit opportunities and initiate actions that answer market deficiencies and fill unsatisfied business needs (Bull et al., 1995 p.3). The latter definitions denote some discourses on female entrepreneurship as feminised and distant from the “idealised” male entrepreneur

when stressing women's hobbies, passion and craftsmanship<sup>28</sup>, which render them far less strategic, business savvy and as single-minded.

Joseph Schumpeter and Isreal Kirzner are two critical economists who provided a general approach to defining entrepreneurship and an entrepreneur. First, the "Schumpeterian" view is broadly identified with innovation and regards entrepreneurs as "lynchpins of economic development" (Schumpeter, 1934 cited in Mole and Ram, 2012 p.3). They are contributors to the process of "creative destruction" (Bull et al., 1995 p.3), a paradoxical term introduced by Schumpeter (1934) that he used to describe the form of economic growth brought by entrepreneurs to the capitalist system. In other words, it is the entrepreneur that introduces radical economic innovation with sustained long-term growth by obsoleting or bringing about the "death" of existing out-dated economic structures. Drawing upon Austrian economic thinking, Schumpeter (1936 cited in Bull et al., 1995 p.3) supplements that the entrepreneur functions in engendering economic development through carrying out discontinuous "new combinations"; that is, there are divergent modes through which an entrepreneur can innovate. By "discontinuous", the Schumpeterian evolutionary economic change is not gradual but punctuated. These new combinations encompass the introduction of new goods or a new quality of an existing good, the suggestion of new methods of production, the opening of new markets, the conquest of a new source of supply, or the reinvention of any industry. It is hence the actions of the entrepreneur that are the substrate of the latter modes. This inference of the "Schumpeterian" heroic entrepreneur, with negligible structural influences upon the entrepreneurs' practices, is prevalent in the chosen Saudi media discourses analysed in this study.

The second view is the "Kirznerian" entrepreneur who is alert to opportunities and can create vehicles to exploit them (Kirzner, 1973; Shane, 2000; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000 cited in Mole, 2012 p.4). His focus is less on the entrepreneur as an innovator and more on as a carrier of knowledge, which disseminates practices (Audretsch and Keilbach, 2004 cited in Mole and Ram, 2012 p.4). In this respect, entrepreneurs utilise

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<sup>28</sup> See for example: <https://smallbusiness.co.uk/turning-hobby-business-2536043/>, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2017/sep/30/turn-hobby-into-business-earning-living>, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/286813>, and <https://www.fundera.com/blog/hobby-into-a-business>. (Accessed: 07/07/2020).

their personal or individual abilities to exploit existing (new and old) knowledge to forge innovations in the market (Braunerhjelm et al., 2015). Whereas knowledge is the predominant enabler of entry, entrepreneurship is the means by which knowledge flow is generated that takes the form of new products and services (Audretsch and Kielbach, 2004; Braunerhjelm et al., 2010; Qian and Acs, 2013 cited in Braunerhjelm et al., 2015). Knowledge spill-over embodied in labour mobility, which generates new knowledge and expands opportunities, is consequently regarded to have a positive influence on entrepreneurship (Braunerhjelm et al., 2015). Generally, labour mobility is a conduit that forges knowledge flows and encourages higher levels of entrepreneurial activity.<sup>29</sup>

It is also noteworthy to highlight some of the characteristics and behaviours of entrepreneurs to make their business approaches more intelligible. According to Kuratko and Hodgetts (1992), entrepreneurs display personal initiative, an ability to consolidate resources, a desire for autonomy, managerial competencies, “aggressive” competitiveness, and risk-bearing capacities. These all suggest gendered attributes, but predominantly, they are deemed intuitive and vigilant to discover, identify, create and exploit new business opportunities. Indeed, the acquisition of knowledge and previous experience in entrepreneurship can have significant impacts on the propensity to exploit new entrepreneurial opportunities. If the opportunities are limited to the domestic realm or the often low-valued service sectors, the gaps in the labour market will be confined to those. As such, the positionality of a female entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia is vital in terms of her knowledge acquisition capacity, which is reliant on her previous entrepreneurial or business experience. It is also surely reliant on women’s networks, environment and the sectors deemed appropriate to their socio-economic status, which concerns the classical agency-structure dialectic.

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<sup>29</sup> To summarise the term from a contemporary perspective, an entrepreneur is: a catalyst for economic change who uses purposeful searching, careful planning, and sound judgement in carrying out the entrepreneurial process. Uniquely optimistic and committed, the entrepreneur works creatively to establish new resources or endow old ones a new capacity, all for the purpose of creating wealth (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992 p.27).



## Types of Entrepreneurs

A distinction has been made between types of entrepreneurs<sup>30</sup>; there are either *opportunity entrepreneurs* or *necessity entrepreneurs*. The former entrepreneurs can recognise and exploit opportunities (Hernandez, Nunn, and Warnecke, 2012 cited in Warnecke, 2013 p.459)<sup>31</sup>. They are often highly educated, possess prior managerial experiences and usually have solid career alternatives with fair wages, which they tend to leave to seize an opportunity. Further, they have access to capital, formal business networks, and they operate within formal sectors in the economy (Warnecke, 2013). The latter type of entrepreneurs, as will be discussed later, categorises this study's samples of women entrepreneurs. Conversely, *necessity entrepreneurs* create self-employment in response to an absence of job options or job loss (Hernandez, Nunn, and Warnecke, 2012 cited in Warnecke, 2013 p.459). They, on the other hand, are not highly educated, do not have prior managerial experience, formal businesses networks, and access to capital. They also work in the informal sector of the economy, where labour laws do not protect them. These types of entrepreneurs, as far as the definition is concerned, are not recognised in this study's sample but "necessity", as will be discussed later, denotes a psychological or endogenous need for the sampled women rather than an economic one. Therefore, the research sample embodies mostly the characteristics of an opportunity entrepreneur but also express a necessity in terms of self-actualisation.

### 3.5. A Meta Stance on Entrepreneurship

Delving a bit deeper into entrepreneurship discourse requires a meta stance on the subject. Discourse about entrepreneurship from an interpretivist lens, which suggests that society is regulated by social order, consensus and maintenance of the status quo, consists of descriptions, explanations, analysis and a multiplicity of interpretations of behaviours (Chell, 2007). To better comprehend entrepreneurship, any discourse will

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<sup>30</sup> Cuervo et al. (2007) argue that there is a distinction between an *individual entrepreneur* and a *corporate entrepreneur*. While the former seizes business opportunities by exploiting them through creating a small or medium-sized firm and participates in funding its capital, the latter anticipates, manages, reinvent the firm on a regular basis and create new business networks.

<sup>31</sup> Other types are *social entrepreneurs* who strive to solve social issues by adopting sustainable, innovative, measurable, and scalable solutions while often focusing on economic development, health, education, or the environment (Warnecke, 2013).

suffice as long as it creates hegemonic global views that sculpt, frame and constitute the nexus between numerous social actors (Grant et al., 2001; Hardy, 2001 cited in Da Costa and Saraive, 2012 p.589). Ogbor (2000 p.608 cited in Da Costa and Saraive, 2012 p.589) argues that the orthodox discourse on entrepreneurship reinforces the production of a mode of knowledge, which serves as an instrument of power. The discourse on entrepreneurship embodies a utilitarian character with an endogenous network of symbolic relations of hegemony and ideological power (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007 cited in Da Costa and Saraive, 2012 p.590). Individuals are thus labelled as capitalist economic subjects through the way they conduct themselves or act within a socio-economic context. In this regard, while considering the centrality of an organisation in the production of an individual's thinking and acting, the enterprise acquires a predominant role in society that is to ensure that individuals enact the goals of the capital system as their own (Da Costa and Saraive, 2012). Reflecting on Saudi Arabia's current economic situation, it is achieving the latter through adopting a somewhat neoliberalist approach to diversify the economy and capitalise on privatisation while celebrating those who perform the agenda of the capitalist economic system, as will be seen in the findings in Chapter 10. The significance of socio-political discourse, with its vital implications for the academic definition of entrepreneurship, has been highlighted for understanding the field (Chell, 2007), which stresses the influence of structural factors on the construction of the field. That is, recognising practitioner and political agenda, which potentially impact perceptions about the nature of socio-economic enterprise behaviour, is deemed necessary when any consideration of an entrepreneurship paradigm arises.

In one example, within a Western democratic context such as the UK, entrepreneurship discourse is argued to create and romanticise *fictive* subjects (Jones, 2012): entrepreneurs. This standardisation of thinking (and portrayal) has the potential to forge the conditions that are named (Foucault, 1977 cited in Jones, 2012 p.237), as discursive processes manipulate both identity and power (Anderson and Warren, 2011 cited in Jones, 2012 p.238). In the UK, through an investigating of the socio-cultural context of entrepreneurship, the social reality of the field reproduced in policies and higher education (HE) practices is linked to masculinised political and theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship education, which in return influences the micro-level practices in HE (Jones, 2012). That is, due to discourses of entrepreneurship were

produced from a masculinised discursive place and based on a tradition of male researchers conducting studies on male entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial activity is designated as a male-dominated one and socially constructed through masculinised norms (Ahl, 2004; Bruni et al., 2005; Lewis, 2006; Marlow, 2002; Marlow et al., 2009 cited in Jones, 2012 p.238). Unconscious ideas, attitudes, beliefs and values that sculpt the entrepreneurship education agenda in the UK have the potential to frame the social reality of the wider domain, producing and reproducing fictive settlements revolving around “the entrepreneur” and “the student”. These settlements accordingly define power relations that normalise modes of thinking that are linked to the identified fictive subjects (Jones, 2012).

In another Western context, in an attempt to understand the construction of entrepreneurship in the public discourse in France, Radu and Redien-Collot (2008) addressed the social representation of entrepreneurs in the French media, in particular the press, to examine its potential influence on desirability (entrepreneurship as an “attractive” career choice) and feasibility (entrepreneurship as a “realistic” and “accessible” career choice) beliefs. Social representations are the consequence of a cognitive and perceptive construction of reality that transforms social objects (people, situations and contexts) into symbolic categories such as values, beliefs and ideologies, and consequently provide a collective structure or system for regulating cognitions and actions (Ljunggren and Alsos, 2001 cited in Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008 p.259). They further encompass both descriptive and normative functions: that is, these social representations *describe* how things *are*, and simultaneously, they depict how things *should be* in order for one to be consistent with prevailing norms and social expectations (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008). In terms of entrepreneurship, it is argued that the deliberate nature of the field means perceptions drive the attitudes and beliefs of potential entrepreneurs; they learn to perceive from many sources, including public media discourses. With this regard, the social representation of entrepreneurs in the French press has the potential to fundamentally frame and sculpt the perception of both entrepreneurship desirability and feasibility.

The media do not merely provide an agenda of public issues and topics that attempt to direct the public’s attention towards them. Instead, they also have an integral role in producing knowledge and culture (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008), provide a general

delineation of social, cultural, political and economic models of societal events and provide pervasive hegemonic knowledge structures, which make the latter models intelligible (van Dijk, 1988 cited in Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008 p.260). The media accordingly frame, sculpt, represent and legitimise a particular version of reality which in return plays an imperative role in the construction of reality (Moscovici, 1976 cited in Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008 p.260). Paradoxically, the social representations depicted by the media simultaneously *reflect* and *affect* public perceptions and assessments; and in this case what is endemically viewed as desirable and feasible in terms of social practices (Habermas, 1984 cited in Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008 p.260). Since “social representations are embodied in discursive practices, within a complex dynamic of exteriorisation, objectification and internalisation of the social universe through language” (Berger and Luckman, 1971b p.40–60; Fletcher, 2005 p.569–71; Johansson, 2004 p.273–93 cited in Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008 p.261), media enable people to exteriorise their feelings and ideas into the social world. Thus, they transform these subjective personal experiences into an endemic reality, which is shared within a linguistic form (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008).

### 3.6. Cultural Discourses on Entrepreneurship

In most instances, the entrepreneur is expected to seize a feasible business opportunity, run an enterprise, generate profit and identify a gap in the market and fill it. As such, these responsibilities require apt leadership skills, strategic planning and expertise to yield business profitability. However, these skills, most likely acquired, are filtered through the prism of heroism, which has implications for how the entrepreneur is perceived.<sup>32</sup> Malach-Pines et al. (2005) argue that entrepreneurs are deemed as individuals of high-status. DeAngelis (2009) alludes to a report by *The Economist* that designated entrepreneurs as global heroes. He argues that entrepreneurs are vital for economic growth and thus, should be deemed as individuals who come with innovative solutions to financial problems. Therefore, he argues that defining an entrepreneur should go beyond the description of a person who establishes a business.

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<sup>32</sup> This can be manifest in John Elliot’s statement: The entrepreneur is more of a ‘heroic’ than an ‘economic’ figure: he must have ‘the drive and the will to found a private kingdom’ as a ‘captain of industry; the ‘will to conquer,’ to fight for the sake of the fight rather than simply the financial gains of the combat: the desire to create new things – even at the expense of destroying old patterns of thought and action (xxi).

Norberg (2007) asserts that the innovations of the entrepreneurs have improved the quality of life over the years, making them the heroes of the world. Mikdashi (2016) adds that an entrepreneur is anybody with an ambition to change things for the better. They are also creators as they have introduced trends in the economy and have revolutionised the production process to supply consumers with quality goods and services. A more pertinent study is that of Anderson and Warren (2011) who examined how entrepreneurship discourse is adopted to produce entrepreneurial advantage by analysing the media depiction of Micheal O’Leary, CEO of Ryanair. They posit that media texts emphasise the entrepreneur as a mythical hero valorised to impact the economy favourably. These do not only reflect a modernist view of entrepreneurship that is portraying positive rhetoric of a “better tomorrow”, but it also sheds light on the success bias, discussed later below, embedded in such discourses casting entrepreneurs as heroes as well individualistic figures.

The concept of individualism infers that human beings should have the opportunity to exercise their right to autonomy and independence. That is, in individualism, there is freedom over conformity or the importance of an individual’s interest over others, which is not the cultural profile of KSA. A business that promotes individualism can give employees authority over the business tasks as well as the opportunity to try new practices in the workplace, which is vital for the development of entrepreneurial skills. However, some Saudi women, who are new to the labour market, require practical business training before they can be given this opportunity of authority and individualism. Lima and Ehrl (2018) investigated the impact of individualism on entrepreneurial opportunities. The authors defined individualism as the freedom to reward one’s achievements (self-reliance). Caldwell-Harris and Aycicegi (2006) argued that entrepreneurial individualism benefits the organisation and that most scholars view individualism as a cultural trait that influences the opportunity to start-ups (Caldwell-Harris and Aycicegi 2006). Husted and Allen (2008) explored the impact of collectivism and individualism in terms of the decision-making process and argued that the inclusion of business practices such as entrepreneurship in the moral domain would heavily rely on the cultural traits of collectivism. Li et al. (2000) conducted an empirical study that suggests that family-oriented collectivistic culture influences the performance of organisations. The findings of the study revealed that societal collectivism has a positive influence on workplace behaviour. With the

heroism and individualism suggested, success is attributed to the agency of the entrepreneurs while undermining structural factors.

Most individuals, including aspiring Saudi female entrepreneurs, could idealise entrepreneurs who have managed to operate profitable businesses with the hope that if they emulate them, they will also be successful. Their view, nevertheless, could be distorted by a phenomenon deemed *survivorship bias* (DeMers, 2017), which is a constituent of the endemic myths of successful entrepreneurship. This is problematic as people can focus on the success stories and ignore structural elements affecting the population (See also Ruef et al., 2003). Mohammed (2019) asserts that when people gravitate towards the qualities of the most successful businesspeople in the world, they overlook the challenges, barriers and important decisions that had to be made for the enterprise to thrive. Nightingale and Coad (2016) have delved further into the concept of survivorship bias in the workplace and argued that the entrepreneurial bias is misleading as it frames businesspeople as individuals with great success while there are entrepreneurs who are underpaid and unsuccessful. Success bias assumes that all business endeavours culminate in profit and significant market share. This disregards the good business ideas that have been unable to thrive after they were executed (Light, 2006).

According to Shepherd, Williams, and Wolfe (2016), business environments are filled with uncertainty requiring the entrepreneur to take high risks. Therefore, in such instances, failure is inevitable. According to latter authors, bad decision-making and market force are common contributing factors to failure. Negative emotional reactions, fear and bankruptcy, are some of the consequences highlighted. Jenkins and McKelvie (2016) focus on the conceptualisation of entrepreneurial failure in the economy. They attempted to answer the question “what is entrepreneurial failure?” in a study that addressed different perspectives of firms as well as entrepreneurs on failure and its implication on enterprises based on their experiences. Khelil (2016) emphasises that having a clear understanding of entrepreneurial failure is vital in helping entrepreneurs manage challenges. He stresses the need for further research that goes beyond identifying the causes and potential consequences. The article posits that there are different dynamics to entrepreneurial failure that must be considered. When it comes to the dynamics, Khelil (2016) emphasised that failure comes in different forms

depending on the circumstances. Some of the implications include entrepreneurial disappointment, exit and persistence. Particularly in the practice of corporate entrepreneurship, failure is a common outcome (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2017). Liu et al. (2019) posit that learning from entrepreneurial failure is of great importance, and businesses should focus on eliminating the obstacles to the learning process. That is, one should not underestimate the importance of the hurdles of running a business especially under uncertain market conditions. These uncertainties render entrepreneurship a process rather than a fixed discourse.

Chiles et al. (2017) argue that entrepreneurship is a process that encompasses a variety of stages, from identifying the business opportunity to setting up the enterprises and commencing operations. Furthermore, there are institutional processes involved that facilitate the interaction between the entrepreneur and the consumers such as compliance, the regulations and licensure. Diamanto and Gabrielsson (2005) aimed at exploring the relationship between career experience and the process of entrepreneurial learning. According to Belz and Binder (2017), they developed a business model that outlines the six phases of the sustainable entrepreneurship process.<sup>33</sup> Some of the core stages mentioned are identifying the problem, opportunity, solution, the bottom-line, funding and developing a sustainable market. Moroz and Hindle (2012) addressed the foundations of understanding the entrepreneurial process. They reviewed the literature concerned with demystifying what it entails to be an entrepreneur. McMullen and Dimov (2013) proposed the need for a shift from viewing entrepreneurship as an act to a process-oriented practice. From entry into the market and exiting, the business undertaking overall has a specific beginning and an end. The growth of small businesses over time can be viewed as a combination of interconnected junctures supporting the existence of the entrepreneurial process.

### **3.7. Conclusion**

This chapter makes cogent the concepts of entrepreneurship, entrepreneur and the cultural discourses framing entrepreneurship. It showcases that, through the lack of

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<sup>33</sup> In the past decade, the threat from Climate Change called for the adoption of sustainable practices premised on environmental conservation. The emphasis on sustainability introduced the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship that encompasses both the economic and ecological goals of the enterprise.

consensus of what entrepreneurship/entrepreneur means, the concept should be highlighted for its malleability rather than being a fixed and perpetuated discourse. As such it is subject to cultural differences, cultural and social denotation and connotations then, encoding and decoding. The chapter also briefly delineated examples of the types of entrepreneurs as they are then reflected upon this study's sample of women entrepreneurs. Predominantly, there still remains the celebration of the individualistic and heroic entrepreneurs, that is mostly male and Western, especially in academia and the mass media. A gendered and imperialist discourse is embedded in such conceptions, that can be problematic when extrapolated to women's business experiences, and especially in a non-Western context. There is also common rhetoric in highlighting the success stories of the entrepreneurs while overlooking structural factors in affecting their endeavours. These have vital implications, not only for Saudi female entrepreneurs but also for wider societies in constructing the concept of *entrepreneur*, thus under-theorising other experiences that do not necessarily reflect the success bias of entrepreneurial activities. Although this study does not believe in a fixed "ontological" nature of entrepreneurship, it was necessary to explore the ubiquitous understandings of the field so that I can measure them against the findings of this study. The chapter also took a meta stance on the concept to unveil and supplement the socially constructed "nature" of the field. Chapter 4 will proceed to discuss entrepreneurship as socially constructed and explore the literature on gender and entrepreneurship. It highlights the power relations embedded within mediated representations of entrepreneurship discourses that affect the social construction of the field.



## **Chapter 4: The Power of Media: Social Constructionism for Understanding Entrepreneurship Discourse**

### **4.1. Introduction – Overview on Social Constructionism**

The process by which individuals, groups or institutions create social reality in interaction with the social structure in which they find themselves has been deemed *social construction* (Thomson, 2008). This is defined as meanings attributed by individuals to objects and events in the environment, and their perceptions of their interaction with those objects. That is, society is actively being produced by individuals as well as structural forces in which those individuals operate; it depicts the world as invented rather than given (Frazer, 2005). Gergen (1985) asserts that social constructionist inquiry accounts to explicate the way by which individuals in society describe the world (including themselves) in which they live. It is further concerned with articulating common forms of understandings, as they currently exist, as they have historically existed and as they might exist. Drawing on Gergen (1985), Tiefer (1990) indicated that a social constructionist approach is a form of inquiry indebted to frameworks such as symbolic anthropology, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, existentialism, ethnomethodology and conventional social-psychological frameworks.<sup>34</sup>

Burr (2015) asserts that social constructionists' focus of enquiry would be on the social practices and interaction between individuals that make social phenomenon intelligible. In other words, it accounts for processes (or dynamics of social interaction) rather than static structures or entities. The main focus is hence on how knowledge and social phenomena are constructed in the interactive processes between

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<sup>34</sup> Although social constructionism is derived from multidisciplinary sources: sociology (Mead, 1934; Berger and Luckmann, 1966), postmodern approaches (e.g. Derrida, 1982, 1998; Foucault, 1970), and literary studies, its genesis could not be traced back to one specific source. Its origins date back to Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) *Critique of pure reason* (1781), George Herbert Mead (1874–1934), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), Alfred Schutz (1899–1959), Hebert Blumer (1900–1987), Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996) and Thomas Luckmann (1927–2016). It is also regarded as a theoretical orientation that underpins poststructuralism, deconstructionism and discourse analysis (Burr, 2015).

individuals; “knowledge is therefore seen not as something that a person *has* (or does not have), but as something that people *do* together” (Burr, 2015, p.8). Berger and Luckmann (1966) published their landmark study, *the social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, in which they argue the reality that is conceived by individuals in society constitutes of phenomena constructed by their social actions and are taken as if they were conventional rules: as if phenomena objectively exist. According to the authors, we exist in a dialectic relationship with society, and through this interaction, we define our social reality and simultaneously, society is defining us. Society’s duality as an *objective* and a *subjective* “reality” should be thus considered.<sup>35</sup> The authors delineated three imperative processes that enable people to utilise language and symbols to construct and sustain social phenomena through social practices: *externalisation*, *objectification* and *internalisation*. With a better understanding of social constructionism, it is vital to highlight its influence in entrepreneurship studies.

## 4.2. Social Constructionism and Entrepreneurship Studies

In entrepreneurship studies, social constructionist concepts are adopted as a means of expanding theoretical explanations of entrepreneurship (Fletcher, 2006). Drawing on Berger and Luckmann (1967 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p. 426) and Giddens (1984 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p. 426), the social constructionist approach provides a closer examination of the link between agency and structure relating individual sense-making constructions to the societal level via the structuration processes (Bouchiki, 1993; Zafirovski, 1999; Bruyat and Julien, 2001; Goss, 2005 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.427). With this regard, the embeddedness of entrepreneurial practices is suggested (Zafirovski, 1999; Jack and Anderson, 2002 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.427). Further, situated local cultures or communities and historical contexts are highlighted as the medium for social construction process (Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.427). Some enquirers are more concerned with the relationality between individuals and their contexts/texts (Bouwen and Steyaert, 1990; Dachler et al., 1995; Bouwen, 2001 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.427), which consequently highlight the *relational constructionism* approach (Fletcher, 2006). In the entrepreneurship

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<sup>35</sup> While objective reality is produced by social action, subjective reality resides in an individual’s consciousness.

arena, adopting the latter approach emphasised individuals, such as the Saudi female entrepreneurs in my study, as “relational beings” who engage in acts of becoming in relation to past and future interactions, as they forge new opportunities. Notably, in business venturing experiences individuals are:

reflecting on particular forms of understanding and in so doing not only fashioning their past (and future) but are also involved in sustaining forms of relationship that will enable particular traditions (and cultural practices) to remain sensible to both themselves and others (Gergen, 1999 p.49 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.423).

It was thus pivotal to consider the relationality between female entrepreneurs’ experiences, understandings and their societal, cultural, political and economic situational context for my research, as this enabled an understanding of meaning-making (of their positions as entrepreneurs) and entrepreneurship as relationally constituted. An understanding of how socio-cultural factors and discursive practices shape individuals’ perceptions may remain elusive. For this reason, a social constructionist approach was employed with particular attention to female entrepreneurship (and its construction) to unveil the latter connection. Drawing upon Giddens’ Structuration Theory, I highlight the nexus between female entrepreneurs as human agents and social forces, and how women themselves can play a vital role in reinforcing or reproducing the social structure (norms, institutions, tradition and so on) influencing entrepreneurship. Further, through addressing relational constructionism, we divert away from a dualist approach (i.e. epistemology vs ontology, explained in Chapter 5). Rather than emphasising how female entrepreneurs construct meaning inherent in their minds, the study highlights how female entrepreneurship in specific (i.e. the discourses revolving around it) gain their meaning from their relatedness to one another and Saudi culture, and how that consequently construct the meaning of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia.

To investigate further the construction of entrepreneurship, debates revolving around the genesis of the field emerged among scholars. Some researchers have focused in particular on the origins of entrepreneurial opportunity (Ardichvili et al., 2003, Sarasvathy et al., 2010 and Shane, 2000 cited in Bruton et al., 2015 p.2) and debated the ontological and epistemological nature of it. These debates concern themselves

with questions such as: do entrepreneurial opportunities exist objectively as gaps in the “real” world waiting to be discovered or do they emerge as a consequence of the perceptions and actions of the entrepreneurs themselves? (Alvarez and Barney, 2007 cited in Bruton et al., 2015 p.2). Specifically, do entrepreneurs discover or create entrepreneurial opportunities? *Imprinting* and *reflexivity* were identified as two fundamental mechanisms and core constructs that underpin the latter question (Bruton et al., 2015).

On the one hand, theorists who advocate that entrepreneurial opportunities are *discovered*, view *imprinting*, or the profound influence of historical and social context in delimiting the perceptual apparatus of entrepreneurs and the range of opportunities available to them, as a vital process that depicts how certain entrepreneurs are more likely than others to discover opportunities. On the other hand, theorists who advocate that entrepreneurial opportunity is *created*, view the role of *reflexivity*, which generates the ability of entrepreneurs to overcome the impediments of imprinting, as a core construct that portrays how some entrepreneurs can *create* entrepreneurial opportunities better than others (Bruton et al., 2015). That is, entrepreneurial opportunity stems from the reflexivity of the entrepreneur. At this juncture and having the sample of Saudi women’s profiles and experiences in mind, it appears that the entrepreneurial opportunities that the women have created (or discovered) can be explained through imprinting. However, and when considering the types of barriers they had to navigate to establish their businesses, it can also be suggested that they created their entrepreneurial opportunities. In my contention, it cannot be purely one or the other but is dialectical; hence, both imprinting and reflexivity play a vital role in shaping entrepreneurial opportunities. Yet, it is also predicated on the degree to which one overshadows the other.

Others argue that opportunity creation is a social construction that does not merely exist autonomously from entrepreneurs’ perceptions (Alvarez and Barney, 2007 p.15 cited in Bruton et al., 2015 p.3). In other words, entrepreneurial opportunity does not exist prior to the entrepreneurs’ awareness. Nor does it exist in a pre-determined exogenous way by the objective external environment such as political regulations, demographic shifts and technological advancements (although this view acknowledges that these objective circumstances contribute to entrepreneurial

opportunity). Instead, these opportunities exist in an endogenous fashion through the social skills and imagination of the entrepreneur (Bruton et al., 2015) and their context (as outlined above in Chapter 3). Entrepreneurial opportunity extends beyond filling a gap in the market place (Bruton et al., 2015); it is the manifestation of an entrepreneurs' creative and original perceptions that exist or are negotiated, in the broader social and cultural context and is articulated through the interaction of these perceptions and the demands of the marketplace. Singh et al. (2015 cited in Bruton et al., 2015 p.6) regard entrepreneurial opportunity as a social construction process, which can be negatively impacted by the stigma or shame of failure.

Drawing on Berger and Luckmann (1966 cited in Alvarez et al., 2010 p.26), a constructionist approach indicates that institutions, social action and the social conditions are constructed through the interactions and interpretations of individuals within a society. In this regard, the focal assumption would be that entrepreneurs interpret specific data, phenomena, or resources and ascribe particular meanings to them in a manner that is different from others' interpretations. They hence create realities and sculpt their behaviours accordingly (Katz and Gartner, 1988 cited in Alvarez et al., 2010 p.27), and decide what opportunity to create while using available resources to accomplish this task. In the respective view, these resources (information and knowledge), are subject to the entrepreneurs' interpretations; that is, the way in which entrepreneurs uniquely interpret their resources and environment and what can be accomplished within both, makes the information then available to them (Alvarez et al., 2010). Consequently, perceptual and cognitive mechanisms are usually reliable within the array of environmental interactions that create them. This, therefore, underscores my original argument that the phallogentric and Western conceptualisations encapsulating the field of entrepreneurship are unhelpful in making Saudi female entrepreneurs' experiences intelligible, since meaning shifts based upon the available resources and overall context.

#### **4.3. Social Constructionism and Female Entrepreneurship**

Feminist theory, discussed later in Chapter 5, sheds light on the problem posed by numerous critiques of "biological essentialism" and its implications on the study of women as a group (Ramazanoglu, 1993 cited in Mirchandani, 1999 p.228). In other

words, the essentialism implicit in studies of women and its impact on understanding female entrepreneurship is not considered. These critiques are based on the conceptualisation that sexual difference (between men and women) is socially constructed. As a consequence, no fundamental difference can be claimed to exist between men and women; rather, this distinction is socially constructed along male/female lines (Mohanty, 1992 cited in Mirchandani, 1999 p.228). A link between those debates on essentialism and the study of female entrepreneurship can exist. While research on female entrepreneurs unveils the differences between both male and female business owners, they can also *construct* those distinctions by highlighting and referring to certain types of differences and ascribing significance to them while obscuring other types. In so doing, sex is taken as a variable at the expense of other types of differences or other combinations of factors, for example, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality, to explain the divergences between individuals. What is therefore crucial is to simultaneously document gender divergences with acknowledging other types of differences amongst entrepreneurs (Mirchandani, 1999), especially class, education and social inequalities.

Differences in gender, class, race, sexuality and so on, should be deemed as fluid processes, which are embedded within social (and socially unequal) contexts and only have meaning when they are linked to each other. Here is where intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) is crucial, but it is beyond the purpose of this study, focusing on gender, to fully address intersectionality in Saudi Arabia. Gender is the main focus of this study as it is the substrate on which many Saudi policies, either new or old, reside that have, and still, impact many Saudi women's lives, including their business endeavours. Women entrepreneurs are located or embedded within a particular ethnicity, class, or sexuality. A focus on these social relations, in which female entrepreneurs are embedded, would require a recognition of how some aspects of women's ethnicity, class, sexuality or domestic situation translates into either advantage or disadvantage in the labour force. Mirchandani (1999) illustrated that feminist theorists argue that the focus should shift onto the ways in which organisational structures are themselves gendered. Or indeed, and more broadly, how the political structure (of KSA) is gendered. That is, gender should be conceptualised as an integral constituent of ongoing processes rather than existing outside organisations. As such, gender (especially in a conservative national context) should

be deemed a process crucial to entrepreneurship rather than a disposition of an individual. Further, an examination of the link between female entrepreneurship, social stratification, organisational structure and business focus is vital not only for obtaining insights on the experiences of women business owners but also on the notion of entrepreneurship itself (Mirchandani, 1999).

#### **4.4. The Social Constructions of Female Entrepreneurs in Media Representations**

##### **A Selection of Western Representations**

Hamilton (2013) argues that, during the last ten years, studies of the media depictions of entrepreneurs “all share the conclusion that media representations of entrepreneurship are dominated by male experience and draw upon a narrow range of stereotypes, typically the heroic adventurer, individualistic, ruthless, and aggressive” (p.91). Women entrepreneurs are under-represented in the media, and often their depiction is associated with domestic concerns, whilst the “normal” entrepreneur is represented by an array of male stereotypes. Such enduring representations erase women’s histories and render female entrepreneurs invisible. Despite a plethora of studies of media representation illustrating masculine dominance (Baker, Aldrich, and Liou 1997; Achtenhagen and Welter 2003; Nicholson and Anderson 2005; Ljunggren and Alsos 2007; Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008; Christofi, Hamilton, and Larty, 2009 cited in Hamilton, 2013 p.90), there has been a slight change in this depiction. By utilising British broadsheet newspapers, Nicholson and Anderson<sup>36</sup> (2005 cited in Lewis, 2014 p.335) deduced that, in exploring the dynamics of the metaphorical depiction of entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial myth remains male and that the inherent challenge is defining entrepreneurship as a terminology (Lewis, 2014). Replicating Nicholson and Anderson’s (2005) study, Christofi, Hamilton, and Larty (2009 cited in Hamilton, 2013 p.92) assert that male entrepreneurs are more likely to be featured and associated with the same repertoire of metaphors. Female entrepreneurs, conversely, were represented as different from male entrepreneurs. They were found to be heavily linked to the domestic sphere; were represented as dispositioned between the private and domestic realm, and their business

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<sup>36</sup> Nicholson and Anderson (2005 p.163 cited in Hamilton, 2013 p.91) studied the media between the period 1989 and 2000 and found that only 13 female entrepreneurs were mentioned in 480 sampled articles.

accomplishments were framed with regards to their domestic obligation and the balance between the two.

Radu and Redien-Collot (2008 cited in Hamilton, 2013 pp.91-92) highlighted the representation of entrepreneurs in the French press by drawing on the notion that media processes objectify representations. They suggest that the information transmitted in the media is selected according to cultural norms and used to forge “figurative core”<sup>37</sup> that becomes universal and endowed with specific properties. Eikhof et al. (2013) discussed the media representations of female entrepreneurs in a British women’s magazine, *eve*, and highlighted the impacts of gendered representations on the reality of female entrepreneurs in terms of influencing their perceptions towards the desirability of the practice.<sup>38</sup> Female entrepreneurs were portrayed in the magazine in question as gravitating towards “feminine” activities and skills that are domestically centred, which are a manifestation of what has been learnt through the gender socialisation processes when they were younger. The females were also depicted as diverting away from the “norm”; or as Ahl (2004; 2007 cited in Eikhof et al. 2013 p. 549) stated, as deviating from the “normal” male entrepreneurship.

Eikhof’s et al. (2013) study is of significance, as it highlights how female entrepreneurs’ experiences are inextricably linked to media and cultural representations. These portrayals do not merely have a crucial role in shaping people’s thoughts and conducts towards women business owners, but they can often endorse socio-cultural expectations of women working in domestic, service and health sectors, which in turn affect potential or current female entrepreneurs’ perceptions of the practice and the type of entrepreneurship they pursue. It is, consequently, significant to relate the media representations of female entrepreneurs to the reality of their practices in order to make their underrepresented (and possibly distinctive) entrepreneurial experiences intelligible (Eikhof et al., 2013). Media representations also project existing gender inequalities in an entrepreneurial context and

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<sup>37</sup> In the French press, the “figurative core” for entrepreneurs are identified as male, aged between 30 and 40 years old, individualistic (no emphasis on entrepreneurial teams), and the entrepreneurial activity associated to that male revolves around launching and taking over firms. Such representations, in turn, mirror and reinforce social interactions.

<sup>38</sup> The paper also discussed how media representations of the women business owners impact stakeholders’ perceptions and views of them, and thus, impacting female entrepreneurs’ business relations and opportunities.



simultaneously, provide an interpretive approach by which these inequalities can be reproduced and exacerbated. Ljunggren and Alsos (2001) assert that media representations have significant effects in terms of forging attitudes towards female entrepreneurship; it also has the power to represent and empower potential role models in this context, as both individuals' behaviours towards entrepreneurship and role models have been shown to increase the number of business start-ups in Norway. Drawing on the constructionist framework to understanding gender, the authors maintain that *entrepreneur* as a concept is in itself gendered; it is ascribed with masculine value. These portrayals highlight male entrepreneurs as distinct risk-takers and powerful men who are involved in the stock market and vigorously grow their firms. Such media representations are a manifestation of the Norwegian society's understanding and perceptions of entrepreneurship; and these depictions contribute in reinforcing such understanding, which consequently leads women's alienation to entrepreneurship (Ljunggren and Alsos, 2001).

Achtenhagen and Welter (2011) adopted textual analysis to analyse female entrepreneurs' representation in German newspapers, and through which, they aimed at establishing an understanding of the relevance of media depictions of entrepreneurship for impacting the inclination towards entrepreneurial practice. A social constructionist approach to entrepreneurship was deployed to highlight how individuals relate to its reality and obtain knowledge about it. The authors assert that media contribute in socially constructing female entrepreneurship as a desirable (or less desirable) career choice, as media reflect current and endemic public perceptions of entrepreneurship by transmitting the accepted values revolving around the practice. Media does not only transmit those values, but they also regulate the nature of female entrepreneurship as they provide information about what is "typically" desirable with regards to both women's and entrepreneurs' behaviours (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2011). That is, perceptions of socially accepted conducts of female entrepreneurs are embedded within media representations of women business owners. They also maintain that media plays a significant role in creating role models and suggest socially accepted entrepreneurial types, which in turn influence individuals' perceptions and likelihood to considering entrepreneurship as a desirable career choice through identifying with the content represented by the media. Nevertheless, the authors found that the German media hinder women's propensity to seriously consider

entrepreneurship as women entrepreneurs are portrayed in an old-fashioned way through which gendered stereotypes and role models are reinforced. The analysed German articles also reproduce notions and images that confirm the perceived *masculine* nature of entrepreneurship, which consequently, coerce women to abide by such constructions while it also fails to provide potential female entrepreneurs with a source of identification. It is striking how there are similarities in women entrepreneurs' depictions in the media despite the variance in cultural and national contexts (i.e. Saudi Arabia and Germany or other Western countries). Baker et al. (1997 cited in Lewis, 2014 p.335) argued that in the United States, media coverage is not parallel to female entrepreneurs' increased participation. The authors stated that the latter was due to the following three reasons: the firms owned or run by women were categorised as small and thus, relatively insignificant; the increased participation of women is no longer considered business news, and stories about difference based on gender are no longer sought. Hence, women's contributions were being muted rather than being absent, and such disguise is presumed to be primarily driven by the prevailing gendered perceptions of organisations, and the acceptance of male norms as being "right" and "natural".

### **A Selection of Asian Representations**

In a Critical Discourse Analysis of a famous Indian print press, Iyer (2009 cited in Lewis, 2014 p.336) analysed the subjectivities in media-mediated discourses with regards to female entrepreneurs in India. The author concluded that the themes of both femininity and patriarchy were prevalent. Bobrowska and Conrad (2017) drew on social constructionist theory, poststructuralist feminist theory and critical discourse analysis to examine the representation of female entrepreneurs in the Japanese press over 25 years. Their analysis pertains to the existing literature on discourses of female entrepreneurship in the American and European press and some research on the representation of businesswomen in Japanese manga. The authors based their research on the concept of entrepreneurs as individuals who founded their organisation or entity while excluding female business owners who inherited the companies. Individual texts from 140 articles were chosen. The authors deduced that although there exist a variety of representations, conventional gendered discourses prevail as they represent female entrepreneurs as inferior, especially in the entrepreneurship discourse, and generally

in the social order. Thus, entrepreneurship is not outside the norm but reinforces the norms. Stereotypical representations (mostly revolving around the division of labour) were masked by feminist “work-life balance” and “entrepreneurship as self-realisation” representations. Their findings confirm that entrepreneurship is indeed perceived to be a male practice. Not only the latter but also, Bobrowska and Conrad (2017) assert that such discourses are reflective of and simultaneously reify Japan’s capitalist patriarchal structure. The apparent gap in the media discourse is conjectured to negatively impact female entrepreneurs’ practices.

#### **4.5. Media Representation and the Construction of Social Reality**

Drawing on Berger and Luckmann (1966), Adoni and Mane (1984) argue that reality construction can only be carried out through social interactions (either real or symbolic); it is a dialectical process in which individuals act as both the producers and products of their social world. *Symbolic* social reality constitutes any form of symbolic expressions, such as art, literature, or media contents, of the objective reality. The objective world and its symbolic expressions (representations) are enmeshed to construct our subjective consciousness, and hence, our subjective reality that informs subsequent social actions. There is a plethora of studies that demonstrate the media’s role in constructing social reality. For instance, Shapiro and Lang (1991) suggest that to posit mass media as representing the public’s opinion and knowledge about a specific event or to suggest that they are unable to distinguish between mediated and “real” events infer media’s powerful role in creating a culture. Gamson et al. (1992) aver that media images, as well as information, encapsulate their meaning by being embedded in an extensive system of meaning or frame. They are not merely a reproduction of social reality, but also, a conceptual picture of artefacts that are not real. Other studies (e.g. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989) confirm the socially constructing process of media by highlighting its socialisation role by constructing reality and transmitting this forged reality to the public. The social element is introduced when media’s “reality” is received, and the majority of individuals agree with it and reinforce this mediated reality. Kidd (2016) draws upon Hall’s (1997) constructivist approach to representation to argue that media and cultural texts construct reality through the utilisation of signs and codes. People, hence, think in signs, words, images and objects, and these have no meaning until they are ascribed

to them (Kidd, 2016). This is particularly relevant to my study as many women in Saudi Arabia, especially those with limited knowledge of entrepreneurship, may forge perceptions of the “reality” of the field through the media representations.

Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue that the basic building blocks of social life are created by media. They maintain that “the social is constructed from, and through, technologically mediated processes and infrastructure of communication, that is, through what we have come to call media” (p.1).<sup>39</sup> Indeed, media are much more than specific channels of centralised content; they entail platforms which are the spaces, through communication, enact the social. The social world is consequently interwoven with media; we cannot assume that media is an exogenous influence upon society as it is an imperative aspect of it. The social world is thus not merely mediated, but also mediatised<sup>40</sup>: changed in its dynamics and structure by the media. This does not infer that the social world is “colonised” by the media, nor it is implied that the media constructs the social world in similar ways in different regions; its degree of influence varies. Another way to highlight the media’s social constructionist function is to demonstrate the operations of ideology<sup>41</sup>. Kidd (2016) suggests that the use of one sign over another is a political and troublesome act that aims to align a certain world- view that naturalises particular ideologies. Burr states that “it is not possible to write about something in a completely dispassionate way; that is, taking up no personal stance at all” (1995 p.vii). Ideology, as a personal stance, can have crucial implications upon how social reality is distorted. That is, even media that is purported to remain objective in reporting or reflecting reality cannot escape from being non-objective and infused with ideological bias. Media representations hence can have an ideological function in terms of representing female entrepreneurs. The ideas represented by the media operate to sustain existing forms of power relations in a particular society (Briggs and Copley, 2002); for instance, reinforcing and valorising patriarchal structures and

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<sup>39</sup> The “social” is deemed as a basic human-life feature: the various mediation that place people into social relations with one another, which entail relations of communication. Further, the mediated nature of the social is based on the material process (objects, infrastructures, linkages and platforms) through which communication and the construction of meaning takes place.

<sup>40</sup> Mediation: is the process of communication in general, that is, the way that technology-based communication entails the ongoing mediation of meaning-production. Mediatisation is a concept that helps us analyse the interrelation between changes in media and communication on the one hand and the changes in culture and society on the other.

<sup>41</sup> *Ideology* in the current sense is the ‘widely held ideas or beliefs, which may often be seen as “common sense”’ (O’Sullivan *et al*, 1994 p.114).

ideologies over female entrepreneurship. The prevailing ideologies and stereotypes about women and the lack of women's input can hinder their position within media power structures and impact their media representation, which in turn reinforce wider gender inequalities (Sakr, 2004). These studies provide vital insights but miss the experiential approaches to female entrepreneurship, on which I aim to focus.

Exploring ideologies (in media representations) therefore entails analysing how meaning is produced in ways that serve to establish and sustain hegemonic structures and relations (Thompson, 1990). They can also be unveiled through analysing the discursive strategies at play in constructing phenomenon such as female entrepreneurship. Ideology can be conceptualised in numerous ways (Storey, 2015); it can refer to the array of ideas articulated by either Saudi society or female entrepreneurs in KSA that can inform their conceptions and practices of entrepreneurship. It can also refer to distortion or masking; in that, ideology is adopted to infer how texts and practices reflect a distorted depiction of reality (Storey, 2015). Patriarchy as an ideological system is an example of how social norms or policies operate to conceal the reality of male domination, and the ways in which women, as a subordinate group, are unable to see such oppression is of concern. "Ideological forms" (Marx, 1976 p.5 cited in Storey, 2015 p.4) is an alternative way to define ideologies as it draws attention to the ways in which texts (such as media) depict a specific image of the world. This view of ideologies is based upon how society is in a state of struggle rather than in consensus, structured around oppression, exploitation and inequality (Storey, 2015). Texts within this struggle are argued to be biased either advertently or inadvertently, in that texts like media representations are never without consequences (Brecht, 1978 cited in Storey, 2015). Barthes (1973) argues that myth (referring to ideology) function at the connotations, the periphery and unconscious level of meaning that texts and practices encapsulate. For Barthes, passing something that is socially constructed as natural, universal and legitimate is how ideologies operate. That is, ideology is engrained in the everyday practices of people. Entrepreneurship is also imbued with a set of ideologies that shape the practice. For women in Saudi Arabia, it can either perpetuate (or disrupt) current socio-cultural practices or gender relations that place women in disadvantaged positions.

#### **4.6. Power, Discourse and Media**

Before discussing the power of media, it is essential to outline and distinguish the differences between discourse, narrative and language. In addition to discourses (outlined in Chapter 1), another way through which we organise our experiences of the world is through narratives (Ryan, 2007). They are effective means by which individuals can convey ideas (Bischoping and Gazso, 2016) and fulfil social functions through material signs, the discourse and the story (Ryan, 2007). Language is one system of representation that is constituted within both discourse and narratives. It enables us to convey and share meanings and concepts through the use of words, images, sounds, notes, and so on. It also enables us to grasp versions of “reality”, and through which we can attain the represented image of events (Hall, 1997). To exemplify, media representations use signs, images and texts organised into language to convey narratives about Saudi female entrepreneurship discursively constructed to create a web of meanings (discourses) about the phenomenon.

The media are public platforms that are analysed as sites of social and power struggles, especially in terms of the language of the mass media: its discourse (Wodak and Busch, 2004 pp.109-111 cited in Barzin, 2013 p.202). According to O’Keeffe (2012 p.441), media discourses are a manufactured form of interactions that are not spontaneous, ad hoc nor private. van Dijk (1996b p.9) argues that the social power of media, particularly the news media, is not restricted to its impact on its audiences, but also encompasses media’s pivotal role within the broader framework of the cultural, social, economic and political power structures of society. In order to understand the latter role, the structures and strategies of media discourses, and their relation to both the institutional arrangements and the audience, then need to be investigated. Media power is predominantly symbolic and persuasive; it has the potential to subjugate readers and viewers by controlling their minds; however, some media users are capable of resisting such persuasion (van Dijk, 1996b pp.10-11). Media’s control should be particularly effective on media users who do not realise the nature of such control in normalising aspects of society, such as gender roles, which Foucault deems normalising power. Various analyses of media power indicate references to power-abuse: the numerous forms of the illegitimate exertion of media power. For instance, the manipulation of media content that conceals information in a way that the

audience's knowledge is transformed in a direction that is not in its best interest (van Dijk, 1996b p.11), the use of legitimate language or purveyors of social power to set mass media agendas (Scheufele, 1999; Weaver, 2007 cited in Abdullah, 2014 p.7) and misguide audiences so that their concerns about larger systemic matters such as of religion, class, gender and culture seem trivial (Abdullah, 2014) are some forms of illegitimate media power. In the era of "fake news" and deepfake (creating images of fake events by using artificial intelligence), however, there has been an exacerbation of questioning media outlets that put the media consumer in a position of power to reject, and even edit, media content.

Foucault's notion of *discourse* bears much pertinence for examining media texts. Hobbs (2008) asserts that the mass media are pervaded with discourses that define the meaning of media representations, and these discourses, from a Foucauldian perspective, complicate the endemic portrayal of the media as being a transparent window unto reality. Although Foucault did not speak of truth as a journalist might (ibid.), he highlighted "regimes of truth", such as those of human sciences that are supported by discursive formations and thus made real through discursive practices. The regimes of truth are infused with relations of power, and consequently, ways-of-seeing that influence the human subject. Foucault's analysis of regimes of truth, discourses and the human subject concentrated on institutional settings such as the asylum, the hospital and the prison. Similarly, this analysis applies to other discursive contexts and institutions such as media organisations in Saudi Arabia. Hobbs (2008 p.11) delineates "... journalists profess to impart social truths, operating within the context of a professional code that values 'objectivity', 'balance' and the 'public interest'. Such a code is, of course, a discourse, which influences the manner in which events, objects and things are represented by the media text". In this respect, media texts are imbued with discourses, which surround and define the represented events (i.e. female entrepreneurship), and they are the symbolic consequences of discursive practices. Despite the professional code of the journalist, media texts can only provide tentative claims to truth, as truth cannot be represented in its pure form by the confined symbolic constraints of discourse (Hobbs, 2008 p.11-12). Think of the significantly governed media landscape in Saudi Arabia as a manifestation of the latter argument and especially with regards to the political structure.

Another imperative notion in the analysis of media power is that of access (van Dijk, 1996a p.85). Power is depicted as based on special access to valuable social resources such as public discourses within the mass media. Having the ability, then, to control mass communication means is one of the critical conditions of social power, specifically in modern information societies (ibid.). “Ordinary people”, from van Dijk’s (1996b p.12) perspective, usually have an active yet controlled access only to daily dialogues with family members, friends and colleagues, and can make use of the news media while they primarily have no direct impact on news content, nor are they the vital actors of news reports. However, the latter argument is obsolete as media users, especially social media today, have an active role in creating and disseminating news stories or media content. Nonetheless, van Dijk adds that elite groups, namely powerful social actors, political leaders, scholars, managers and so on, have more or less confined access to divergent forms of texts, that is especially true for their access to media discourses (ibid.). They may control media discourses by setting, for example, agendas, topics, venues, choice of language, topics and politeness or deference strategies; and determine who says (or writes) what, to whom, in which way and in what occasions. Therefore, social power is attributed to the number of discourse genres and properties that groups or institutions control. Further, the ways in which mass media and its discourses are controlled by “power-holders” serve to sustain and enact unequal power relations and representations of social groups that appear to be endemic, when in fact they are immanent with social inequity (Abdullah, 2014). This control, however, does not necessarily render the audience with no social power in this transaction; that is, it does not determine how the reader or viewer responds.

The above studies highlight the representational aspect of forging the conceptions and practices around entrepreneurship, but misses the experiential element that contributes to shaping the field. The divergent ways of decoding media representations can in themselves lead to forging new concepts about entrepreneurship through this study. The ways by which the sampled women entrepreneurs practice, share, narrate and portray their entrepreneurial identities and endeavours can be another form of representation that should be measured against these existing media representations, which also forge conceptions around the field of entrepreneurship. That is, female entrepreneurs are expected to be co-constructing their own identities and practices. The latter steers us back to one of the primary objectives of this research: that is to



examine the media representations against the women's actual experiences of entrepreneurial practices. The women in this study are media literate and have been exposed to the media content that I have analysed. Their responses, therefore, constitute a type of reading that plays a vital role in constructing female entrepreneurship, which will be discussed later in Chapter 9 and 10.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

This chapter outlined an overview on social constructionism and its application in entrepreneurship research, and in particular, female entrepreneurship studies. It discussed the relatedness of female entrepreneurs with others and their contexts through the relational approach to understand how entrepreneurial experiences are imbued with meaning and are thus socially constructed. In that, it related the social construction of entrepreneurship to questions of agency and structure. As a structural factor, the chapter focused on media's role in shaping entrepreneurial experiences and how media representations can alienate or deter behaviour. Therefore, exploring the concept of mediatization can help us understand the interrelation between changes in mediated communication on one hand and changes in culture in another. In that, an analysis of structure and agency (how women contribute in socially constructing entrepreneurship by overcoming barriers and seizing or creating opportunity) is essential to address the research gap in media studies that do not take into account the participation of female entrepreneurs in shaping entrepreneurship discourses. The next chapter discusses feminist theory and its various strands and application in female entrepreneurship studies and misapplication in KSA.

## **Chapter 5: Exploring Feminist Theories in Entrepreneurship Studies**

### **5.1. Introduction – Overview on Ontology and Epistemology**

Before discussing the feminist approaches utilised in this study, it is vital to first outline the main philosophical perspectives, the ontological and epistemological assumptions, underpinning the current research as they elucidate the theoretical thinking, the design of the study and the methods adopted, discussed in Chapter 6, to interpret and make claims about the obtained data from both the CDA and interviews. In a sense, it provides clarity about the assumptions and choices I am making in this study that can be then meaningfully interpreted. On one hand, ontology is the philosophical study of being, existence or what there is. It is concerned with what actually exists in the world. Questions dealing with the existence of things or entities such as God or universals are problems in ontology that characterise most philosophical problems (Hofweber, 2004). It is also the study of what applies “naturally” to the entities that exist (Simons, 2015). Epistemology, on the other hand, is the philosophical study of knowledge; its origin, nature and limits (Stroll, 2020). In other words, it can be referred to as the theory of knowledge. The term epistemology is derived from the Greek “episteme” (i.e. knowledge) and “logos” (reason) (Stroll, 2020). Epistemology concerns itself with the scope, methods and validity of acquiring knowledge; some of its questions include: what constitutes knowledge claims, and how can we produce or acquire knowledge? (Moon and Blackman, 2017).

Drawing on Lincoln and Guba (2000), this study adopts a social constructionist paradigm, which is based on a relativist ontology and a transactional/subjectivist epistemology. A relativist ontology, or relativism, suggest that there is no one objective truth to be known (Hugly and Sayward, 1987); rather, there are multiple truths that can exist, and therefore, data obtained from research cannot reveal a universal truth about reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Social constructionist ontology is in contention with the objectivism, the theory that meaning and truth reside in their objects outside human consciousness, adopted by a positivist stance (Crotty, 1998). In that, it rejects naïve realism (or a realist ontology in general) that is

consistent with the existence of one single reality that can be studied and perceived as truth by using appropriate methods (Moon and Blackman, 2017). It is thus in accordance with a reality that is relative and constructed by how people construe and experience the world at different junctures and epochs in life. From an epistemological point of view, social constructionism adopts a transactional/subjectivist stance (Lincoln and Guba, 2000) that also opposes an objectivist epistemology. In that, reality and truth are socially constructed through sense-making and how individuals engage in their world in transactional relationships (Crotty, 2003). The “real world” then does not pre-exist independent of human engagement and symbolic language (Moon and Blackman, 2017). Subjectivist epistemology is concerned with historically, socio-culturally, linguistically situated understandings and experiences relative to particular times, places and individuals, and human experiences as accomplished in interactions, discourses and practices in myriad of ways (Cunliffe, 2011). A transactional/subjectivist epistemology, consequently, does not separate subjects and objects; they mutually exist as individuals’ or groups’ sense-making, interpretations and engagements to construct the context in which they reside.

## **5.2. Feminist Ontology and Epistemology**

Defining feminist ontology and epistemology separately is a challenging but possible task as the myriad of feminist theories can overlap in their ontologies and epistemologies. Therefore, for the scope of this study, discussing the adopted feminist approaches as operating on a spectrum would better clarify my philosophical stance(s). I first attempt to define the terms separately then present my approaches adapted onto Cunliffe’s (2011) study. Feminist ontology concerns itself with theorising being and rejecting a Cartesian dualist approach of separating the mind and the body as well as emotions (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Feminist theorist question whether adopting a Cartesian framework, or an Aristotelian one, would distort our understanding of the world in privileging men and masculinity over women or femininity (Haslanger, 2007; 2017). Therefore, a feminist ontology challenges the binary Cartesian ontology that characterises reality as operating through two opposing “forces”; that of femininity and masculinity, and challenges the stratification and “heterosexualising” of reality (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Feminist ontology, on the contrary, recognises and is appreciative of difference. Stanley and Wise (1993) offer an alternative view to Cartesian dualism within feminist ontology by suggesting the body is culturally embodied and is subject to divergent meanings, experiences and feelings and is also

positioned within competing discourses, power and control, which resonate with a postmodern feminist approach discussed below. Another concern of feminist ontology is of the structure and relationship between the social world and the natural one (Haslanger, 2007; 2017), which later informed theories of the social construction of gender.

Feminist epistemology concerns itself with how prevalent practices of knowledge acquisition, justification and attribution place women and other subordinate groups in disadvantaged positions and seeks to reform them to advance the groups' interests (Anderson, 2020). In specific, early theorising in feminist epistemology aimed to understand how gender, and its global conceptualisations, affects the creation of knowledge and subsequent justification practices. It argues that by excluding women from enquiry, denying them epistemic authority and depicting them as inferior, for instance, ubiquitous knowledge practices disadvantage women and reflect the flaws in these practices, researchers and scientific approaches (Anderson, 2020). I will focus on the three feminist epistemologies discussed by Sandra Harding (1987) although throughout the last three decades, feminist epistemologists have blurred the line between the three views. Feminist empiricism adopts a positivist epistemology and advocates a reform to scientific and empirical enquiry by incorporating feminist values especially their depiction of sex bias in traditional scientific practices (Anderson, 2020). In that, they combine empirical scientific methods with feminist insights. Therefore, any androcentric biases in scientific enquiry can be fixed through rigorous, and adherence to, scientific methodologies.

I can argue that resonating with the respective epistemology is the concept of essentialism, which is vital for this study as seen in Chapter 8, as it was deemed the philosophical foundation on which positivism rests (DeLamater and Hyde, 1998). One of the main assumptions of essentialism is that particular phenomena in the world are universal, natural, inevitable, and biologically determined (also called *biological determinism*) that can be captured and understood through scientific methods. Wilkins (2013) adds that in essentialism, there is an agreement that there must exist an essence, which all of the members or instances of a certain kind have in common. There must also exist true generalisations, preferably lawful ones, of all members of one category, such as women. An essence should thus encompass essential characteristics that can

be explored and discovered. Such conceptualisations about fixed and stable forms, which characterise most of this study's participants as seen in Chapter 8, are in contention with the two ensuing feminist epistemologies, discussed below, that I adopt as lenses to analyse the social construction of Saudi female entrepreneurship in KSA. Feminist standpoint epistemology asserts that marginalised groups have been disadvantaged due to the differential power held by groups that can define knowledge. Its concern is thus to portray the world from a specific socially situated "standpoint" or perspective, which consequently represents subordinated social groups with an epistemic authority (see Anderson, 2020). It also emphasises that women's everyday lives or experiences should inform knowledge (Smith, 1987), or should operate as a form of entry to scientific enquiry. Standpoint was used as a notion to stress that one's knowledge is influenced by where one stands in society; we thus start from the reality that what we experience and what we know about the world and others is affected by that position or location (Smith, 1987). Further, a postmodern feminist epistemology is concerned with language and meaning in a way that is representative of the postmodern/poststructuralist propensity to shift away from explicit consideration of the "real world" towards how meaning is forged by culture through forms of representation (Beasley, 1999). The latter focus on meaning over matter does not infer a rejection of "reality", but rather it is an implication of a perspective that reality cannot be grasped free of social values; that is, since the real world (including the body) can only be recognised in language, there could not be "value-free" perspectives (Beasley, 1999).

Judith Butler's 1990 *Gender Trouble* is one the most pivotal works in postmodern feminism as it highlights that "woman" is a complex category that encompasses more than class, race, sexuality, and other facets of individualism, which can define each woman divergently. Butler argues that material objects, such as the human body, are also subject to social construction processes. That is, gender is not a biological "fact", rather is a discursive construction and performance: a body is forged as a function of discourse. The body consequently performs or "acts" what is dictated by the heterosexual culture as normative for one sex or another. Gender according to Butler does not seem to have ontological status; the repeated acts constitute its reality. Postmodern feminism thus rejects an essential nature of women; that is, there does not exist one, unique, absolute, or universal definition of "woman" nor gender.

What is more crucial about these tenets is the emphasis on biological traits as being constructed through language. Language and cultural factors are thus integral in formulating our perceptions as we derive meanings from them; those meanings reflect our idiosyncratic interpretations, which are dictated by our culture.

A feminist postmodernist epistemology resonates with a feminist standpoint approach in that there is no one reality, truth or perspective to be captured or attained. There are conversely myriad forms of experiences, positions, meanings, articulations and situated standpoints that construct reality as historically and culturally specific. In other words, I can argue that both epistemologies reflect a relativist ontology, explained earlier. This shows the blurred lines between, and complexity of, feminist epistemologies. I now attempt to further clarify their metatheoretical assumptions by adapting them on Cunliffe's (2011) work, proposing the three "knowledge problematics", that is, among other aims, an attempt at reconceptualising the original subjectivist-objectivist approaches. To highlight the complexities and nuances in the social sciences, Cunliffe proposes three problematics: objectivism, subjectivism and intersubjectivism. I position feminist empiricism within the objectivism problematic as within this continuum, reality is perceived as an entity, encompassing concrete structures, that exists independent of human consciousness and interactions (Cunliffe, 2011). It resonates with a feminist empiricist approach in that they both argue that scientific methods of positivism can be utilised accurately to understand natural laws, mechanisms, structures, discourses and behaviours.

Subjectivism, similar to a feminist standpoint epistemology, concerns itself with historically, socio-culturally, and linguistically situated experiences. In that, they are relative to certain groups, individuals, times, contexts and places and thus, there is more than one "truth" and meaning. Knowledge and sense-making are also constructed through people's everyday practices and interactions (Cunliffe, 2011). The focus of scientific enquiry is thus on the myriad forms of human experiences. This notion of the fluidity and multiplicity of truth overlaps with the third problematic, intersubjectivism, in which I position a postmodern feminist epistemology. The intersubjective problematic also suggests that meanings are multiple and context specific but focuses more on joint sense-making as we relate to each other and our surroundings in constructing the social reality in which we are embedded (see

Cunliffe, 2011 p.654). Therefore, the focus is on common-sense knowledge as enacted in social contexts and captured through interpretative approaches.

### **5.3. Feminist Theory: The Problem (or Not) With It**

Researching feminist theory within a Saudi Arabian media and cultural context can be problematic as feminist theories emerged from Western philosophical thought that is in contention with the conventionalism and religious nature that designates the country. This, however, does not reduce the significance of feminist theories and their applicability within a Saudi context as many Saudi women are concerned with issues around women's rights and gender-based discriminations. Not only is this concern on a local scale, but international organisations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International have encouraged Saudi Arabia to ameliorate Saudi women's rights and especially that the rhetoric about Saudi women in the global media has been, for many generations, mostly negative as to depict them as oppressed and subjugated. Perhaps, by deploying such Western feminist thought is one way to radically alter the existing conceptions and representations around Saudi women, and especially that many Saudi women, who are Westernised, seem to be open to such new ideals.

Hoza (2019), nevertheless, disagrees with the latter. In her insightful article, which deserves significant attention, the author posits that although Western feminism is aligned with some Saudi women's search for equality and justice, there are divergences regarding the conceptions of equality due to socio-cultural factors, which mainstream Western feminism does not consider incorporating in women's rights agenda. Hoza exemplifies this difference by highlighting many Saudi women's preference of women-only spaces "as they empower them in a culture that values the differences between men and women" while women-only spaces would be perceived as exclusionary from a Western feminist view. Hoza avers that Saudi women tend to distance themselves from Western feminism as it portrays them as subordinated and voiceless. One of these women is Nura Al-Saad (2015), a Saudi writer, who is against Western feminism due to the "West's need to define freedom". Lila Abu-Lughod (2002), discussing the veil or veiling, suggests that Western feminism should accept that different histories manifest as divergently structured desires for women's rights,

and move past seeing differences as impediments in justice. Islamic feminism has emerged in response to the wider Western movement as many Muslim countries, when Western feminist movements diffused, grappled with its secular and colonial connotations (Hoza, 2019). Feminism in the Muslim countries developed into two strands: secular feminism, led by upper class Muslim women who had connections to Europe, and Islamic feminism, which is affected by and articulated within an Islamic paradigm (Hoza, 2019). In Saudi Arabia, many women prefer using the term *womanist* or female (*nisā'iyya*) (Al-Dabbagh, 2015 cited in Hoza, 2019). Even if the adoption of these terms is becoming widely prevalent in Saudi Arabia, political movements are prohibited by Saudi law. Instead, and as Hoza succinctly describes it by drawing on Mill's Sociological Imagination, many Saudi women's "movements" are types of individual acts of empowerment (or transgression) that often lead to social changes rather than legal ones.

The emergence of other forms of feminism, such as Islamic feminism, is an implication of the shortcomings of the original white, Western mainstream feminist tradition. The problem with Western feminist theory does not only reside in not considering cultural factors impacting women's rights, but in neglecting other factors such as ethnicity, race, social class, privileges and so on, while taking gender-based discriminations as the foci of its concern. This is not striking especially that the movement originated amongst white, Western, educated women, influenced by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, who questioned their roles in society. In other words, although feminist theories have a homogenous aim - that is to challenge traditional Western political and social thinking and its obscuring of women - they perceive females as a homogenous group. They are hence not coterminous with "feminism" (Jackson and Jones, 1998). Diversity in ethnicity, class, nationality, education, language and so on, are significant as they are not merely differences that can be neglected, but they are often hierarchical that forges inequalities among women, which overlaps with gender inequality.

The current lift of the male guardianship rule can be viewed from a feminist lens in ameliorating women's rights. However, although loosening the law endowed many women with autonomy, it does not particularly address the gender discriminations embedded within the domestic sphere of Saudi households. According to Chant and



Brickell (2013), one of the main factors that perpetuate (and potentially intensify) gender disparities in society is the fact that household and family are not typically addressed in policy interventions. This is why we see young Saudi females leaving the country in some non-politicised instances. Urbanised, educated and working Saudi women within progressive families, however, can have the privilege of not worrying about such concerns. The issue of independence was raised by interviewee (10), who I will focus on later, who stated:

Education is not a joke. It really empowers. It gives choices. I work from home. I can work and offer that business, 'cause I have the money...I call the shots. Even if my husband doesn't like the idea...financial abuse is really important...The low socioeconomic ... No, even the very filthy rich families, oh my God! the dynamics! [If] I have no skills... I have never worked... I can't leave this marriage...It's an epidemic. Not just in lower classes...Because she didn't learn and develop herself and has no business and nothing. So, she's stuck in this cycle... (I.10).

#### **5.4. Feminist Approaches in Entrepreneurship Studies**

A good deal of research has adopted a feminist lens to study gender and entrepreneurship. Vossenberg (2014), for example, argues that the different feminist epistemologies carry different approaches to gender and entrepreneurship, and that feminist approaches tend to be a tacit (rather than explicit) constituent of entrepreneurship research. From a *feminist empiricist* perspective, the gender gap in entrepreneurship is attributed to the structural barriers that women face such as unequal access to capital or property rights and the lack of access to networks when establishing their ventures (Calas et al, 2009; Ahl, 2006 cited in Vossenberg, 2014). A feminist empiricist lens to gender and entrepreneurship, therefore, encompasses the positioning of women as disadvantaged entrepreneurs as they operate within a male dominated context. Entrepreneurship studies from a *feminist standpoint* approach would set out to reveal the institutionalised power structures extant in society that have implications upon creating and reinforcing gender hierarchies that constrain women's entrepreneurial endeavours (Vossenberg, 2014). The latter lens would start from women's gendered activities and experiences that entail unpaid care labour (see also Marlow, 2020). Promoting entrepreneurship informed by this approach would be based upon situated knowledge(s), and more specifically, of those in marginalised positions to advocate for their full participation in an entrepreneurial realm.

Entrepreneurship from this approach is deemed a specific experience for certain individuals in a place and with a wide variety of consequences such as economic and social value (Hanson, 2009 cited in Vossenbergh, 2014).

Further, Vossenbergh (2014) posits that *post-structural* feminism also enables the conception of entrepreneurship as a specific experience for certain individuals in certain contexts. Intersectional analysis and deconstructionism, as post-structural tools, can untangle the discourses that forge societies' unique experiences and practices and, hence, are apt for problem formulation and assessment (Lombardo and Verloo, 2009 cited in Vossenbergh, 2014). Post-structural feminism and its emphasis on the multiplicity of identities, locality, reflexivity and discourse deconstruction, enables the promotion of entrepreneurship (Vossenbergh, 2014) as a viable career option. This approach however has been criticised in terms of advancing the feminist agenda. Clegg (2006 cited in Vossenbergh, 2014) argues that the main concern with post-structural feminism is that individuals are designated as merely discursive and social constructs who lack the resources to act in the world and hence create conditions for transformation. It is consequently challenging to derive premises for feminist political action due to poststructuralism's descriptive, theorising and relativistic nature (Vossenbergh, 2014). Adopting a feminist lens to entrepreneurship, then, enables understanding it as a gendered process. Vossenbergh argues that standpoint feminism in particular makes intelligible women entrepreneurs' strategies of creating conditions for transformative change. It also illustrates how the gendered hierarchy of patriarchy forges everyday relations of productive and unpaid care work. That is, it makes visible the domestic relationships in which women entrepreneurs operate that consequently have implications upon the entrepreneurial context and behaviour (Razavi, 2013 cited in Vossenbergh, 2014). Entrepreneurship as a practice cannot therefore be viewed as independent of the domestic setting and society's gendered division of labour that includes unpaid care and reproductive work (Ahl, 2012; Vossenbergh, 2013 cited in Vossenbergh, 2014). That is, rather than viewing women's businesses as a separate economic activity in a social context, women view their businesses as an interrelated system of relations that include the family, community and the business (Brush, 1992). Espousing a feminist perspective thus would entail valuing what is normally obscured and under-valued. It also entails designating entrepreneurship as a local practice embedded within a certain context in which

gendered power relations tend to highly affect entrepreneurial endeavours and ventures. As such, women entrepreneurs should not be recognised as a unified group incurring similar problems, rather, they should be viewed as unique from one another each with specific issues, barriers and solutions.

An earlier study was conducted by Ahl (2006 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010) in which she delineates three strands of feminist epistemologies that can explain the gender disparity in entrepreneurship. The first strand demonstrated by Ahl (2006) is *liberal feminism* that advocates the argument both sexes are essentially similar, and both men and women are equally able of rational thinking. It is therefore structural barriers that result in women's subordination and hinder them from gaining experience and access the necessary markets or resources significant for an entrepreneurial practice (Ahl, 2006; Fischer et al., 1993 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010). The liberal feminist approach also advocates change to occur to navigate and reduce these barriers to enable women to perform similarly to their male counterparts. The second outlined strand is that of *social feminism*, which posits that men and women are different from one another (Ahl, 2006 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010) due to socialisation processes that expose both genders to divergent experiences and, in turn, affect their views to the world (Fischer et al., 1993 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010). It advocates equality in difference; that is, it stresses on differences between men and women, and also views feminine attributes as advantages to capitalise on.

Research adopting either of the above strands, nevertheless, tacitly advocates the male standard of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010) as they tend to perpetuate gender as the primary element of stratification (Byrne and Fayolle, 2010). The latter, social feminism, provides a partial and individualised explication to gender differences in entrepreneurship by merely highlighting socialisation processes as the main contributing factor. Liberal feminism fails to incorporate or allude to socialisation processes all together that can explain the inequality in the domestic division of labour as well as caring (Marlow and Patton, 2005). The third strand, *social constructionist feminism*, proposed by Ahl (2006), questions the adoption of sex as the primary variable and assumes that identities are socially constructed (Fiaccadori 2006 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010). It argues that gender is performative and is produced and reproduced through power relations (Calas and Smircich 2006 cited in Byrne and Fayolle, 2010) while it also acknowledges both the

structural powers and the agency one can hold (Byrne and Fayolle, 2010). In terms of entrepreneurship, this approach reveals how gender is performed and how entrepreneurship is a gendered field. More specifically, it unveils the institutions that are imbued with gendered ideologies that impact entrepreneurial behaviour. Ahl (2006) argues that by examining the construction of family policy, business policies, institutional orders, division of labour, cultural values, education and so on, it unveils the trajectory of female entrepreneurship, which is the main premise of my research. As opposed to social feminism, social constructionist feminism rejects the assumed divergences between both sexes, as these categorisations in an entrepreneurial realm are deemed futile (Ahl, 2006).

### 5.5. Women's Life-World

A key term to signify the world in which women live has been deemed *life-world*, which entails reality as opposed to the “world” that science constructs. According to Sandywell (2004 p.163):

The lifeworld is the world of mundane knowledge presupposed by all scientific knowledge, a realm composed of everyday experiential typifications and interpretive schemes by means of which habitual patterns of social interaction are practically managed.

It is intersubjective, coherent and a public sphere of consciousness shared by members of a society: the structure of life-world is regarded to sustain the paramount reality of social coexistence. The concept *paramount reality* was adopted by Berger and Luckmann (1966) to highlight that this type of “reality” is ubiquitous amongst the multiple realities that we experience. It is where the tension of our consciousness is at its highest. The latter has been also regarded as the *ordered reality*: its phenomena are pre-structured in patterns that appear independent of our perceptions of them.<sup>42</sup> Female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia may then presume that they are embedded within one paramount reality that subsumes under it the other forms of realities, which women may not be aware of. At least, the impression given by Saudi Arabia in the global press, and particularly to Western audiences, is of women as oppressed and with identities defined entirely by patriarchy.

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<sup>42</sup> Everyday reality is constituted by an order of objects that were given the status of objects before our existence. These objects represent themselves as encompassing divergent spheres of reality, and one's consciousness can be said to move from one sphere to another (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

We rely on representations to understand one another and the world. But what type of world is the Saudi media making intelligible through the analysed depictions within the current study? If indeed representations obscure everything outside of discourses, can one speculate that women in KSA are living in discourses' subjective illusion that may not unveil the "objectivity" of the world and their experiences? If they are indeed encapsulated in an illusion presumably held by the "real" ontological world, does this implicate that any form of meaning ascribed to representations are valid (as long as they reside within prevalent forms of knowledge)? When discussing *reality*, the terms "objective" and "subjective" are almost always referred to, but *paramount reality* is also of significance as it is pre-structured, and thus, lives are predetermined. That is, in the context of my study of KSA, female entrepreneurs might not escape the objectivity and universalism of what it means to be both a female and an entrepreneur dictated by those given structures. Yet, they engage with and interpret this given reality in their own manner, which is a subjective experience, and one that deserves attention and analysis. This subjectivity, however, is obscured due to shared meanings and experiences that are associated with entrepreneurship and what it entails to be a "woman". That is, female entrepreneurship, as a potentially unique and subjective experience, is rendered objective.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

The current chapter outlined the concepts of ontology, epistemology and the ontological and epistemological stances of social constructionism adopted in this study. It also outlined feminist epistemology and ontology and their adaptation on a metatheoretical problematic continuum. The chapter also discussed the application of feminist theory within a Saudi cultural context that is characterised by its conventional - religious context, which is currently, under the policy reforms, concerned with Saudi women's rights and liberation. The chapter then presented a review of the literature on the different feminist theories (e.g. empiricist, standpoint and constructionism) to expand our approaches and understanding of gender and entrepreneurship studies. The final section of the chapter discussed everyday reality from a feminist lens and its implications on women's entrepreneurial conceptualisations and practices.

## **Chapter 6: Methodology – A Social Constructionist Approach to Female Entrepreneurship**

### **6.1. Introduction**

Since there is a lack of research making Saudi female entrepreneurs' experiences intelligible, and especially from a social constructionist stance, it is vital to first delineate the types of approaches espoused to study entrepreneurship in general, gender and female entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurs in a national context, in particular. Since my study also concerns itself with the representation of Saudi female entrepreneurs in Saudi magazines, it is then imperative that I explore previous literature researching women's depictions in magazines. The respective chapter outlines the research methodology that provides a philosophical underpinning for the chosen methods adopted in this study. In other words, it outlines the epistemology and ontology adopted, discussed in Chapter 5 that are in line with the current research investigation. This delineation is essential as it provides an explication as to why some choices were taken regarding the methods even though the research paradigm does not provide an absolute truth, as argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2008). This outline depicts the core tenets associated with a social constructionist philosophy of science, embedded within the techniques utilised in this study.

### **6.2. Part One: A Methodological Review of Researching Entrepreneurship and Women's Magazines**

#### **Methodologies in Entrepreneurship**

In the *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship*, Neergaard and Ulhøi (2007) posit that entrepreneurship is a field seemingly lacking in methodological diversity and rigour (see also Wortman, 1987; Aldrich, 1992; Huse and Landström, 1997; Low, 2001; and Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016). The authors hold that research in this arena has been predominantly descriptive and the empirical studies have been based on structured surveys and questionnaires (see for example Sadi and Al-Ghazali, 2010; Osowska et al., 2016; Abu-Asbah and Heilbrunn, 2011; and Welsh

et al., 2013). Moreover, women in entrepreneurship is underexplored and has only been studied by a few scholars, such as Ahl, 1997; 2004; 2006; Brush, 1992; Brush et al., 2009; Stevenson, 1986; Birley, 1989; McAdam, 2012; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Manolova et al., 2007; Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010). The implication is, then, that entrepreneurship as a field is ripe for deeper and wider study and could benefit from a multiplicity of methods encompassing qualitative and quantitative techniques (Perren and Ram, 2004 cited in Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2007 p.1). Qualitative methods, nonetheless, are considerably underrepresented in entrepreneurship research (Hindle, 2004; and Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016) due to a plurality of reasons, one of which is the adoption of a quantitative method has resulted in more publications with regards to other methodologies (Huse and Landström, 1997 cited in Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2007 p.2). The latter is perhaps due to the social sciences and business studies dominating the field of entrepreneurship. Another reason for the underrepresentation of qualitative approaches in the entrepreneurial field is due to the method's perceived lack of sufficient methodological rigour, that in turn finds rejection by mainstream journals (Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2007 p.4).

The respective study therefore aims to challenge this notion of the insufficiency of utilising a qualitative methodology in entrepreneurship studies by demonstrating how such an approach can be aptly adopted to obtain insightful data. As entrepreneurship as an economic, professional and personal practice and style has spread around the world, drawing upon globalisation, liberal market economies and social mobility to do so, it is timely to reflect more deeply on who exactly gets to be an entrepreneur, in what kinds of contexts, and how these contexts shape our understanding of what entrepreneurship is.<sup>43</sup> This is the main reason why I chose to undertake this study in the context of British Cultural Studies, which has a history of analysing the popular and within the research environment of cultural and media policy studies which considers the future of work as a question of cultural and social value. A qualitative method then highlights participants' experiences, viewpoints, meaning construction and so on. Also, as this study views entrepreneurship and womanhood as malleable,

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<sup>43</sup> As this study also concerns itself with issues revolving around the social construction of entrepreneurship, womanhood, identity formation, discourses, representation and cultural change, it is arguably more useful to employ a qualitative approach as it will aid this research to develop concepts that in turn make the previously mentioned phenomena more intelligible within the national context of Saudi Arabia.

complex and dynamic constructions in a state of flux, they cannot be captured by using a single method. The openness of a qualitative approach enables the plurality of ways in which female entrepreneurship in KSA is conceived to be captured and thus theorised. As Neergaard and Ulhøi (2007) argue, a qualitative approach enables exploration of unveiled depths in, and advancement of, the field of entrepreneurship.

Discourse analysis has been designated as vital for entrepreneurship scholars who adopt it to analyse texts such as media and research articles (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007). Its potential was highlighted in terms of enabling understanding social and cultural change within an entrepreneurial context (Fairclough, 1995 p.2 cited in Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.193). Discourse analysis is crucial in terms of generating novel knowledge in the entrepreneurship field as it allows researchers to move beyond what is taken at face value. For example, it provides insights on how the discourse revolving around fostering female entrepreneurship sheds light on enabling women to work from their domestic settings rather than focusing on women's social reality of carrying a double burden (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007). Since discourses forge social reality, it is fair to assume they have an impact of entrepreneurial identities, activities and conceptions (Phillips and Hardy, 2002 cited in Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.194). Discourse analysis then serves in reconstructing patterns of social realities and in turn identifying the structuring phenomenon (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.194). As van Dijk (1998 cited in Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.194) asserts, analysing texts, such as media representations of female entrepreneurs, unveils the discursive sources of power, ideologies, hegemony, inequality and bias, which in turn have significant implications upon women's entrepreneurial experiences.

There is a considerable array of research that has adopted discourse analysis in entrepreneurship studies. Feldmeier (2001 cited in Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.202) for instance, grounds her study in a text-oriented hermeneutic method to analyse the operations of divergent kinds of fiction revolving around entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Ogbor (2000 cited in Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.203) draws upon postmodernism, deconstructionism and critical theory to explore the impacts of ideological coerciveness in conventional entrepreneurial discourses. Achtenhagen and Welter (2003 cited in Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007 p.207)



conducted a discourse analysis on the use of vital terms or notions related to entrepreneurship reflected in popular German newspapers and how these changed from 1995 to 2001. The following section highlights gender and female entrepreneurship and the ways in which they have been explored. The significance of such delineation resides in providing the respective study with insights to inform the methods utilised.

### **Methodologies in Gender and Female Entrepreneurship**

Henry, Foss, and Ahl's (2016) systematic literature review presents insights on the ways in which the methodological approaches in the respective field has evolved and demonstrated existing gaps, which my research aims to fill by transforming the ways in which the field of female entrepreneurship is approached and researched. Since gender is viewed as performative in the respective study, it corresponds to what the authors deem as "gender doing" (West and Zimmerman, 1987 cited in Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016 p.233) that infer the constructionist element to women's entrepreneurial identities. Hence, women do abide by current conceptualisations and perform their entrepreneurial identities according to available discourses. Some of the studies adopting a post-structuralist lens use methods such as life histories, ethnography, phenomenological approaches, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, case studies and in-depth interviews (Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016), which enable exploration of the complexity of women's entrepreneurial experiences.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, a post-structuralist approach will prevail in the current project since, as mentioned previously, this study concerns itself with the multiple experiences of women and the contribution of knowledge in terms of expanding the ways in which female entrepreneurship as a field is researched and conceptualised. Also, as Saudi Arabia is currently witnessing a liberalising cultural shift, conceptions revolving around women and their social positionality should subsequently change. This can be attained by using a repertoire of post-structuralist epistemologies and methodologies that divert away from conventional approaches such as quantitative studies to mirror the extant social change. A move away from perceiving women as merely caregivers, for instance, and

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<sup>44</sup> Ahl and Marlow (2012 cited in Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016 p.235) state: the need for an epistemological shift in entrepreneurship research is urgent. Current positivist epistemologies that focus on assumed, innate sex differences will inevitably reproduce the 'othering' of women, as well as the conception of women as the ones that need to be fixed in order to meet the norm.

domestic pertinent conceptions was hence necessary. Ahl (2002) conducted a discourse analysis on the discourse of female entrepreneurship in eighty-one research articles published in entrepreneurship journals. Her analysis reveals the unintentional reinforcement of women entrepreneurs' subordination to their male counterparts in terms of entrepreneurial endeavours. Langowitz and Morgan (2003) explored the ways in which female entrepreneurs are portrayed in the popular business press in the USA and compared the discourse with findings from a survey of women entrepreneurs. They argue that focusing the method on the profile of female entrepreneurs can reveal how these portraits convey a human image of the female entrepreneur in addition to attracting potential investors. In another discourse analysis, Pietiläinen (2001) illustrated how gender is constructed in both spoken and written language in articles published between 1990 and 1997 in a SME magazine. Baker et al. (1997) explored a paradox that is the inclination of more women becoming business owners and the low coverage of women entrepreneurs in both scholarly journals and the mass media within the USA. Conversely, Achtenhagen et al. (2013) found that women were underrepresented in the entrepreneurial realm. They used a social psychology experimental method to explain this underrepresentation.<sup>45</sup> In another study concerned with representation, Eikhof, Summers and Carter (2013) reviewed researches addressing female entrepreneurs' media representation and gender-based inequalities in the entrepreneurial arena and led an in-depth qualitative analysis of women's magazines reporting on women entrepreneurs.<sup>46</sup>

### **Methodologies in Female Entrepreneurship in MENA<sup>47</sup> and KSA**

To explore the available opportunities and barriers female entrepreneurs face in Saudi Arabia, Danish and Smith (2012) drew upon Brush et al.'s (2009) 5M model to analyse the findings generated from surveying thirty-three Saudi women entrepreneurs. Their

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<sup>45</sup> The authors, in particular, presented theories of social psychology that are pertinent to the women in entrepreneurship domain to make their experiences intelligible. Such experimentation enabled determination of causal relationships as suggested by the authors.

<sup>46</sup> The authors conducted a content analysis to unveil underlying meanings of texts through exploring the types of information and the ways in which they were used. The findings of their study infer the impact of media representation of women entrepreneurs in terms of reinforcing stereotypical conceptions about womanhood by portraying them as focused on feminine-typed and domestic-related entrepreneurial pursuits.

<sup>47</sup> Middle Eastern and North African region.

results reveal that despite extant societal and institutional hindrances, the number of women in Saudi Arabia establishing their own businesses is growing. Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010) used online, pick-up and drop-off surveys that were sent to the emails of one-hundred business women in the Chamber of Commerce. Welsh et al. (2013) investigated the source of knowledge and support for Saudi female entrepreneurs when establishing and running their business ventures by adopting self-administered questionnaires distributed both online and offline through five female entrepreneurs' organisations and networking sites. A qualitative approach of in-depth interviews is observed in Syed's (2011) study in which the author set out to examine women entrepreneurs' personal characteristics, motivational factors, business activities, challenges and perceptions on entrepreneurial behaviours in Saudi Arabia. In another qualitative study to investigate the factors that impact the performance of women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, Shafii (2015) interviewed Saudi women entrepreneurs using a semi-structured approach to gain insights on the women's entrepreneurial experiences.

### **Researching Women's Magazines and its Influence on my Methodological Approach**

My thesis adopts a feminist theoretical stance that functions as a lens through which some of the Saudi female entrepreneurs' everyday experiences are captured and analysed. Although not all magazines in my sample are women's magazines, it is vital to explore how research has been conducted on women's magazines as they centre upon women's representation, which is also of concern to the current study. Some of the extant studies on women's magazines also examine the underlying ideological systems that, arguably, impact and sculpt women's everyday realities such as their conceptions of femininity and womanhood and the ways in which they perform their gender. This is particularly relevant as I also analyse the institutionalised ideologies that encapsulate the representation of Saudi female entrepreneurs in the sampled magazines. The below obtained insights from the studies are also of significance; they revealed the embedded power relations within the discourses of Saudi female entrepreneurship in KSA.

I am particularly interested in Yoke Hermes' (1995) work as it provides numerous insights on women's magazines.<sup>48</sup> Hermes (1995) posits that older research on women's magazines led by feminists are inadequate as they show concern, rather than respect, for women who read women's magazines. This concern belonged to a "modernity discourse" in media criticism that deemed media such as the magazines as agents of alienation and, in older feminist media criticism, as agents of oppression, or conversely, as agents for social change. This is still currently relevant for my study, as will be discussed later in the findings. Such concerns with women's magazines have merit in that the ubiquity of certain depictions, such as women's domesticity, can be left unchallenged and thus normalised. This is not to infer that showing concern means readers such as female entrepreneurs cannot be cynical of extant stereotypical ideologies of womanhood for instance, but to highlight that idealistic depictions can exclude a large segment of the population who may not recognise themselves as entrepreneurs due to the lack of representation. It can also suggest that women should sculpt their entrepreneurial identities and practices in light of these quintessential depictions. In a sense, the alienated are those who are underrepresented, and thus in contention with the portrayed entrepreneurs.

This study also draws upon the work of Marjorie Ferguson (1983). In her book, she discusses the role of women's magazines in Western society and argues that women's magazines entail a social institution which serves to foster and maintain a cult of femininity.<sup>49</sup> These magazines do not merely reflect the feminine role in society, they also supply one source of definitions of that role. Another influential research is by Anna Gough-Yates (2003) who focuses on how magazines' meanings are produced and circulated, which I endeavoured to reveal by analysing the structural influences. The author delineates that some feminist critics of media studies have argued magazines, or media in general, contribute to the reinforcement of gender divergences and inequalities in contemporary societies. They are also ideologically manipulative,

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<sup>48</sup> The small but steady stream of publications about women's magazines has, until recently, hardly ever taken the perspective or the experiences of the reader into account [...] It seems highly probable, therefore, that we know more about the concerns and views of the researchers than we do about the actual practices of women's magazine use' (Hermes, 1995 p.10).

<sup>49</sup> This cult is manifested both as a social group to which all those born female can belong, and as a set of practices and beliefs whose periodic performance reaffirms a common femininity and shared group membership.

and they function as a system of domination.<sup>50</sup> Taking the text as the primary point of analysis would ignore the roles of producers in using and transforming discursive and ideological elements within the development of women's magazines. As such, the investigation of structural or contextual factors (i.e. political, social, economic and so on) impacting the representation of female entrepreneurship is fundamental.

### **6.3. Part Two: Research Sample**

#### **Magazines Sample – Rationale**

I have chosen magazines for this thesis as they discursively construct the identities and practices of female entrepreneurs as idealistic, context specific, aspirational and arguably, non-relatable to many female entrepreneurs. Within these media representations can also exist a reflection of Saudi society as magazines are one manifestation of a nation's popular culture through which we can understand the socio-cultural milieu encompassing the national value systems, beliefs and especially attitudes toward women. Some of the Saudi magazines, such as the ones deployed in this study, have both print and digital versions, which imply that magazines have merit in KSA in light of the high number of digital and social media adopters. Not to mention that many industries, advertisers and institutions promote their businesses through them. The utilised materials for print publications, the designs of the covers and pages and the well-positioned articles can infuse magazines with a sense of credibility and formality, which readers can enjoy, share among friends and use for personal transformation as well as information. They are portable, accessible and fit in with the domestic sphere as well as the public sphere. Magazines can also have a long "afterlife"; print versions can be saved in homes (or found in beauty salons, hospitals, clinics, cafes, airplanes and so on) while some digital formats have their archival systems to access older magazine issues. In other words, they can function as archives, circulating and re-circulating such that it may be impossible to estimate the full extent of their reach and readership. That is, magazines can be engrained into everyday life

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<sup>50</sup> Women's magazines industry in specific can be seen as a monolithic meaning-producer, circulating magazines that entail signs and messages about the nature of femininity that serve to promote and legitimise endemic and dominant interests.

without consciously recognising it. Also, magazines follow women's life trajectory from teen magazines to women's health, parenthood, education and hobbies, to wellness, money management and retirement. There is a magazine that caters to each female life stage. Magazines are also a source of information via which women can forge knowledge or ways of understanding the world, or specific phenomenon such as female entrepreneurship. The credibility ascribed to some magazines can render their portrayal of a phenomenon such as entrepreneurship as "truth".

Another rationale for selecting magazines is inspired by theory. In particular, Foucault's and Fairclough's concepts of discourse and power. Magazines are discourses and modes of representations, therefore, the explored theories are applicable upon magazines. As discussed in Chapter 1, discourse can be referred as a set of rules and mechanisms for the production of certain discourses (Mills, 1997 p.62); it can also be designated as a set of systematic practices that forge the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972 p.49 cited in Mills, 1997 p.17). It can also be deemed as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr, 1995 p.48). Such conceptions are of significance as they can either tacitly or explicitly suggest that both media discourses such as magazines (and associated governmental and institutional regulations) and women's modes of conceiving and practicing entrepreneurship can socially construct female entrepreneurship. Magazines as a discourse can thus create the knowledge about female entrepreneurship through its representations and choice of words (or language), and the ways in which this knowledge is institutionalised and perpetuated: that is, by shaping ideologies, behaviours and practices within an entrepreneurial or business context. In other words, magazine discourses can govern the content of news or knowledge about women entrepreneurs as they constitute rules of classification, inclusion, and exclusion. They also entail rules that determine who can make news or report on female entrepreneurs and have the potential to create and define true and false statements about them and thus socially construct their entrepreneurial identities, at least their mediated ones. Magazine discourses can then play a vital role in shaping and creating meaning systems that can gain the status of "truth", and how they conceptualise and construct female entrepreneurship.

## **The Chosen Magazines Sample**

With regards to the selected media samples, this study focused on three magazines with different genres to enable exploration of the textual, visual and cultural construction of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabian media from the multiplicity of lenses of social constructionism and postmodern feminism. These genres are: a business magazine, a lifestyle/guide magazine and a “conventional” women’s magazine. Three different genres of magazines enabled analysis and comparison of the representation of female entrepreneurs within three different media contexts and facilitated an exploration of whether the audience type impacts how women entrepreneurs are represented. That is, it was vital to investigate whether there was conflicting discourses about female entrepreneurs impacted by the context (type of magazine) and audience type (e.g. men/women, housewives/businesswomen, Arabic/English speakers, and so on). The sample consisted of digital formats, as two of the magazines (namely *Entrepreneurs KSA* and *Destination Jeddah*) have the exact content and display in both the print and online versions. The third magazine, *Sayidaty*, is the official name of the Arabic and English print and online (Arabic) magazines; it also has an English online version called *About Her*, which is not a translation of the Arabic website and with its own content. Despite these differences of content, there are various similarities in how they present Saudi women entrepreneurs.

### ***Entrepreneurs KSA***

The first magazine I chose is *Entrepreneurs KSA* (*Rowad Al Aamal* in Arabic) as it directly pertains to one of this research’s objectives, which is to analyse the representation of Saudi female entrepreneurs. The magazine is a leading publication aimed at fostering, developing and revealing extant and potential entrepreneurial skills and opportunities for both businessmen and businesswomen in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it was essential to analyse whose experiences the magazine is portraying and who gets to benefit from the provided market opportunities. *Entrepreneurs KSA* encompasses success stories, insights, ideas and advice to encourage business leaders and youth to excel at their business endeavours. As per an online representative for the magazine, the Saudi Distribution Company is their publisher. The magazine is distributed in the Saudi Airlines and its Forsan lounges at airports; Saudi Majlis Al-Shura (Shura Council), which is the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia; ministries; universities; hotels; Chambers of Commerce; and sent to businessmen and

women. They circulate 70,000 prints each month: 40,000 of which are specifically distributed on the Saudi Airlines. The Editor in Chief is a Saudi woman. This distribution suggests that they have a very exclusive type of readership, which is reflected on the types of women entrepreneurs they feature in their magazine.

### ***Destination Jeddah***

*Destination Jeddah*, established in 2008, is a monthly lifestyle/city-guide magazine based in Jeddah and Riyadh that provides its readers with up-to-date information about business news, fashion, restaurants, entertainment events and location and so on. In other words, it serves as a guide to both locals and visitors to the city of Jeddah in terms of attractions, restaurants, housing, shopping and businesses in Jeddah. The magazine has both identical print and digital publications only in English. The magazine's Editor-in-Chief is Enas Hashani who co-founded the magazine alongside Maria Mahdaly; the two women who then founded Rumman Company media and publishing house that produces the magazine. With regards to its audience, the magazine is targeted towards English speaking locals and visitors between the age 20 and 45. The readership, according to the magazine, amounted to over 120,000 in 2015. It is distributed free of charge in certain locations encompassing clinics, universities, hotels, malls, spas, gyms, embassies and housing compounds. It is also delivered to its subscribers. The most used categories are ranked as follows: online magazine, offbeat, food, healthy living, business, spirituality, art and music, explore KSA and things to do. I chose this magazine as it is widely distributed within some universities, therefore it targets young individuals, especially female students, who can become influenced by the representation of the female entrepreneurs. The magazine also adopts a more of a liberal and "cool" style and content in terms of usually depicting Saudi females away from the conventionality associated with the Saudi cultural attire (i.e. the Abaya). It was thus necessary to analyse if such a liberal framing by the magazine can affect who gets to be represented, and how they are represented, as a Saudi female entrepreneur.

### ***Sayidaty (About Her)***

*Sayidaty* magazine is a leading weekly Arabic and monthly English women's magazine established in 1981. Although it is published in both Dubai and Beirut, the magazine is owned by the Saudi Research and Marketing Group, which is an integrated publishing group in the Middle East (SRMG, 2017). *Sayidaty* magazine is



culturally considered a benchmark not merely in Saudi Arabia, but also in the Middle East, and it remains in its leading position in terms of distribution in KSA that amounted to 22.4 percent of Saudi magazines market share in 2014.<sup>51</sup> The magazine covers a variety of news and articles ranging from social affairs, fashion and beauty, cooking, lifestyle, health, décor, to business and professions. Its online version is deemed a top choice for women making it the number one online magazine in the Middle Eastern region with registered users from across the globe that accounted to 7.4 million. The magazine was ranked among the top ten websites in female and lifestyle categories in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region. In January 2017, its digital format Sayidaty.net is ranked first in female magazines' websites in the Middle East.<sup>52</sup> According to the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, Mohammed Al-Harthi, a Saudi renowned journalist and media personal, the online website received 39 million views in 2014 (which is the latest information I could obtain). The magazine has Arabic and English print and digital publications. The online versions differ in terms of naming and content as the Arabic is also called *Sayidaty* and the English one is *About Her* magazine. I analysed the digital version for the ease of accessibility.<sup>53</sup> In terms of its circulation, the only found information was for 2009, which was 143,351 magazines (Global Investment House, 2009). The choice of this magazine was based on its popularity and based on my personal knowledge of how it permeates many places especially homes, clinics, gyms and beauty salons in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. There is no indication of its readership (even after several attempts to contact the magazine to obtain such information). Its classification as a regionally renowned magazine, that arguably has crucial implications for the reputation of women's businesses, rendered it a significant magazine to analyse for this thesis.

### **Magazines Sampling Procedure**

I decided to include magazines that are published before and after Vision 2030<sup>54</sup> that was initiated on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to analyse whether there are radical (or even incremental) changes with regards to Saudi female entrepreneurs' media depictions.

<sup>51</sup> See: <https://www.abouthier.com/node/9696/people/features/sayidatynet-remains-top-online-portal-women-saudi-arabia-and-across-region>, (Accessed: 03/06/2018).

<sup>52</sup> See: <https://ie.linkedin.com/company/sayidaty>, (Accessed: 03/06/2018).

<sup>53</sup> I contacted the publication centre for the print archives, but no assistance was provided.

<sup>54</sup> Choosing the magazines in light of Vision 2030 is vital as the initiative also aims to address the gender divide in terms of women's incorporation in the economic realm. business arena.

Specifically, one of Vision 2030's objectives is to create a vibrant society through which they aim at increasing household spending (from 2.9% to 6%) on cultural and entertainment projects within Saudi Arabia.<sup>55</sup> There is however, no mention of the media under this cultural and entertainment promotion. Although magazine regulations are considered under the regulations of the Ministry of Media, they are also a form of entertainment that belongs to the creative industry, which should be part of these cultural projects. Napoli (2008) posits that cultural and media policy share various commonalities, and a definition of cultural policy that constitutes cultural industries increases the extent to which media policy overlaps with cultural policy. It is therefore imperative to analyse media representations of women in light of such cultural policy reforms, as these can encourage liberalisation of the creative and cultural industries including media organisations, which in turn can impact the construction of female entrepreneurs.

My sampling procedure follows a segment of Lacy, Riffe and Randle's (1998) methodology in which they advocated stratifying magazines by month as a sampling method. My sampling was based on selecting four random issues per year for each *Destination Jeddah* and *Entrepreneurs KSA* from 2016 to 2018. That is, I selected a sample size of 12 issues for each of the magazines, which accounts to a full population of 24 issues. Between both magazines, I chose articles based on their availability. As for *About Her* magazine, the English online version of *Sayidaty*, it did not have issue numbers, so I chose every article I could find, which accounted for 17 articles. Therefore, in total, I analysed a sample of 41 articles. Table 1 below is a summary of this selection process.

### **Methods for Analysing Magazine Representation - Critical Discourse Analysis**

Following Huckin (1997), the first step was to approach the magazines' texts in an uncritical manner, similar to an ordinary reader, then approach it a second time from a critical stance. That is, I read the chosen texts and revisited them at different levels, raised questions about them, mentally comparing them to other pertinent texts to assess

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<sup>55</sup> The promoting of culture and entertainment will be attained through the General Entertainment Authority by supporting the efforts of the private and non-profit sectors, regions and governorates to organise cultural activities and projects.

<b>Magazine Name</b>	<b>2016 Issue/number of articles</b>	<b>2017 Issue/number of articles</b>	<b>2018 Issue/number of articles</b>
<i>Destination Jeddah</i> (n=19)	January/ 1	February/ 1	January/ 1
	April/ 1	July/ 1	March/ 2
	August/ 1	November/ 1	April/ 5
	November/ 1	December/ 1	May/ 3
<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i> (n=16)	February/ 2	January/ 2	April/ 1
	May/ 2	July/ 1	August/ 1
	June/ 1	Aug./Sept./ 1	September/ 1
	December/ 2	November/ 1	October/ 1
<i>About Her</i> (n=17)	na	na	na

Table 1: Magazine Sampling (Created by the author)

intertextuality. I did not start by deciphering the texts word by word, but I categorised them in their respective genres (e.g. business, entertainment, women's magazines and so on). Before delineating my approach to Critical Discourse Analysis below, it is vital to briefly describe it.

According to van Dijk (2001 p.352), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical research that predominantly examines the way social power, specifically inequality and abuse, is legitimised, enacted, and reproduced by text and talk (*discourses*) in a social and political context. It acts as a dissident approach to take an explicit stance to understand and thus expose social inequality. In this light, the chosen texts are analysed and interpreted to understand and reveal power relations and control mechanisms; as power can be rooted within texts. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is an imperative element in CDA as power inequalities lead to hegemonic ideas and structures (Foucault, 1970; Foucault, 1988 cited in Wall et al., 2015 p.261); thus, Foucault's aim was to emancipate those who are subjugated by hegemonic powers. To identify and contend those powers, Foucault's CDA analysed, more than communicative utterance, the context in which those communications were uttered by assessing power relations between individuals and structures that confine the

development of knowledge and that guide their behaviour (Stahl, 2008 cited in Wall et al., 2015 p.261). Similarly, I analysed the context and epoch in which the magazines' portrayals are produced to unveil the power dynamics and institutional powers at play (such as patriarchy and capitalism) that forge conceptions and behaviours around female entrepreneurs.

### **CDA Approach**

I used Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional framework, adapted by Behnam and Mahmoudy (2013), to analyse the discourse of female entrepreneurship in the three chosen magazines. In this framework, three forms of analysis were mapped into each other. Through the first, I analysed the language of the written texts within each chosen magazine; through the second, I analysed the magazines' discursive practices in terms of representing Saudi women entrepreneurs and through the third, I analysed the structural elements embedded within the magazines' texts that can socially construct female entrepreneurship in KSA, discussed in Chapter 11. Benham and Mahmoudy (2013) regard these three guidelines as *micro level*, in which the analysis is focused upon the lexical choices, text's syntax and rhetorical tools; the *meso level*, which entails analysing the text's production and consumption<sup>56</sup> in relation to extant power relations; and the *macro level* in which intertextual relations are considered to unveil broad social affairs that impact the concerned text. My aim through adopting this method is to unveil the underlying ideological assumptions on which the magazines' texts are embedded. Table 2 below (see also Appendix B) is a further elaboration on how I adopted this method.

## **The Female Entrepreneurs Sample**

### **Participants' Profile**

The sample does not need to incorporate women who read magazines in nor do they have to be readers of the magazines I have chosen to analyse in this study.

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<sup>56</sup> Due to time constraints, the sampled women were not analysed in terms of their "consumption" of the magazines. I provided detailed descriptions on a selection of representations and asked their opinions about them.

Analysis Levels	Description	
<b>Micro Level</b>	<b>Micro Level:</b> Analysis of the lexical choices used in the texts. This level entails Micro tools such as:	
	Lexical Analysis	Analysis of word choices in a text.
	Over-Lexicalisation	Analysis of over description in a text.
	Naming and References	Analysis of how individuals are named or referred to in a text.
	Classifications	Analysis of how people are systematically classified in a text (e.g. individualised/collectivised).
	Suppression	Analysis of what is missing from the text.
<b>Meso Level</b>	Analysis of the discursive mechanisms that link texts with obscured power structures: the relationship between language, power relations and ideology embedded within the texts.	
<b>Macro Level</b>	Analysis of the texts in light of the socio-cultural, socio-economic and political milieu in which they are embedded.	

Table 2: CDA Description (Created by the author)

My aim is to explore the plurality of ways of conceiving and enacting entrepreneurship by the sampled women, the types of barriers (or enablers) they encounter and compare their experiences with the mediated discourses. In light of the previously mentioned Vision 2030, I am particularly interested in nascent entrepreneurs, who have recently entered the entrepreneurial arena or have up to 2 years of experience, to explore whether they experienced improved entry circumstances and diminished structural barriers in response to KSA's reforms and initiatives. In comparison, I also aimed to incorporate more established female entrepreneurs who have more than 4 years of business experience, aged between 36 to 50+, to examine if they incurred more structural barriers when establishing their ventures prior to Vision 2030. The reasons for including both profiles (nascent and established female entrepreneurs) is to include a variety of accounts of entrepreneurial experiences and conceptualisations. I did not confine the research sample into specific fields, but my chosen participants confirmed my conjecture that they mainly operate within "feminine-typed" businesses such as the arts and service sectors. The actual sample of female entrepreneurs can be summarised below (Table 3).

<b>I</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Relationship / Children</b>	<b>Business Type</b>	<b>Business Years</b>
1	Saudi American	25-34	Married / 1 infant	Luxury Communications and Marketing Agency	9
2	Saudi Pakistani	18-24	Single/ none	Graphic design	-
3	Saudi	25-34	Single/ none	Fashion design	10
4	Saudi	35-44	Divorced / 4 young	Abaya designs	8
5	Saudi	20-25	Single/ none	Fashion design	6
6	Saudi	35-44	Divorced / 2 young	Multidisciplinary platform for Creatives	-
7	Saudi American	45-54	Married / 3 young	-Maternal health -Jewellery -Date paste supplies	-16 -7 -7
8	Saudi	25-34	Married / none	Travelling art platform / gallery	8
9	Saudi	45-54	Divorced / 1 young	PR and communications agency	20
10	Saudi	55-64	Married / adults	Behavioural coaching	2
11	Saudi	45-54	Married / young	Islamic fashion	7 (closed)
12	Saudi	35-44	Married / 3 young	Behavioural coaching	7-8
13	Saudi	25-34	Married / none	Multidisciplinary art and design studio	8
14	Saudi	25-34	Single	Magazine publishing	12
15	Saudi American	35-44	Married / 3 young	-Jewellery -Date paste supplies	7
16	Saudi Pakistani / American	25-34	Married / none	Behavioural coaching	6
17	Saudi	45-54	Married / 3 young	Health and fitness	12
18	Saudi	45-54	Married / adult	Organic meat supplies	-
19	Saudi / American	25-34	Single	Digital design	5

Table 3: Saudi Female Entrepreneurs Sample Profile and Business Type (Created by the author)

### Participants Sampling Procedure

Drawing upon Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), qualitative research involves understanding a small sample as the goal is to unveil the process or meanings people ascribe to their experiences or their social realities, which is the purpose of this study, not to make generalisations. Since this research is concerned with women's conceptions and practices of entrepreneurship and the ways they attribute meaning

to the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship, purposive or judgment sampling was utilised. Purposive samples were selected based upon the research question in addition to the resources available to the researcher (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006). I then “purposively” chose to search for and contact the women entrepreneurs who were depicted in my sampled magazines. I found numerous women on Instagram, a popular platform that Saudi businesswomen and entrepreneurs use to promote their businesses, through which I contacted around 40 or more women. I also used the term “Saudi entrepreneur” (in Arabic also) on Instagram to find the women. Many of the renowned female entrepreneurs was difficult to include in the study, but I managed to contact a few of them who are known on a national level.

### **Methods for Analysing Magazine Readership and Target Market - Interviews**

This study recognises the inextricable and varied experiences of women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, yet it does not reject that they might incur similar barriers due to their gender, which endows them with an essentialist categorisation. That is, generalisations can be made about women as a constructed essentialist group with regards to structural and gendered experiences while aiming at dismantling these generalisations to unveil the power relations that can be encapsulated within extant discourses such as the media texts. By stating “constructed essentialist” group above, I highlight that the essentialism ascribed to women’s roles and behaviours are socially constructed, or what is perceived as naturally occurring (i.e. caring roles), are social constructions. This study also acknowledges that such essentialist generalisations are manifest in knowledge that are in turn made objective through discourses and representations. It is therefore significant to explore women’s experiences to reveal the structural and ideological influences at play. One way to obtain detailed insights into women’s experiences is through interviewing. From a basic perspective, interview research encompasses gathering information from participants such as their stories, thoughts and feelings about a particular situation, and providing them with a voice in either academic or public discourses (DeVault and Gross, 2006). It is, nevertheless, more than this. Interviewing recognises the complexity of human consciousness; the power of language; the embedded nuances conveyed through gesture and expression; challenges immanent in listening; issues of translation and so on. (DeVault and Gross, 2006). The above view does not recognise the power constituted in empirical research, that is, the existing hierarchy and relations between researcher and participants; the consequences

of making scientific claims and the politics of representation and interpretation (DeVault and Gross, 2006).

I therefore adopt a reflexive approach to be wary of the above interview complexities when conducting the study's analysis. That is, since the study deploys a feminist lens into women's lives, reflexivity and relationality such as the researcher's context and intellectual biography should be considered against the participants' (DeVault and Gross, 2006). I turn the lens back onto myself as a researcher to acknowledge and clarify my own situatedness within, and in relations to, the thesis and the impact it may have on the utilised conceptual framework, the research sample, and the questions I ask. I also identify my position as both an "insider" and "outsider" to the research participants in terms of having shared experiences. In that, I consider and make cogent both differences and similarities between myself as a researcher and the research sample. It is also necessary to highlight any unconscious cognitive biases, which can influence my worldview or, as Buetow (2019) argues, value what fits my pre-existing beliefs. Through adopting a social constructionist lens, I consider reality as socially constructed through interactions, language and symbols, and cultural meaning as residing in the participant's subjective experiences that are also stemmed from and affected by endemic discursive understandings. In that, I view social reality as discursively constructed through institutional discourses, traditions, structures and values that impact women's beliefs and behaviours, rather than predetermined and given, that were then made personal through processes of internalisations. However, as a Saudi who grew up abroad but was exposed to Saudi norms, people and educational discourses, I acknowledge the essentialism embedded within these discourses that instilled conventional ideals regarding gender disparities. Through the language utilised, the treatment of both males and females at school and the designated activities for each gender (males play soccer and girls knit and decorate), it is not surprising that many Saudi women grow up holding essentialist tenets about motherhood and their roles as women in society. Therefore, when conducting this research and writing the interview questions, I had in mind the common cultural values I share with the potential research participants in terms of the importance ascribed to the privacy of Saudi households and the sensitivities immanent in discussing the political domain. I also had in mind the differences in shared beliefs between my social constructionist stance and the mostly essentialist perspectives held by many Saudis about gender and the "nature" of reality.



From an early age, I had an interest in understanding our physical as well as our social realities in impacting the ways we think and behave, and more importantly, in understanding the complexity of our existence as well as our essence. As an institution utilised to answer some of these complex questions about life, its meaning and our roles in it, religion plays a fundamental role in many Saudis' lives. In that, it is deeply rooted in many Saudis' approaches to life such as finding meaning, building communities, solving everyday problems and contributing to humanity. Therefore, religious interpretations and essentialist ideals go hand in hand when, for instance, ascribing *both* genders in KSA with specific personal and socio-cultural roles. However, my early curious nature and interests in philosophy, psychology, sociology, media and gender studies (in addition to theology), encouraged me to utilise the latter fields as tools to understand aspects of life such as the nature and meaning of reality, our sense of identity, our essence, our roles in society, and the power dynamics embedded in defining the latter elements. In a sense, as an "insider" (being Saudi myself), I understand the essentialism stemmed from religious, educational and cultural discourses in designating Saudi women with certain roles. Conversely, as an "outsider" (in terms of living abroad and being a researcher), I endeavoured to understand how women used and expressed their agency, within the boundaries of conventionalism and patriarchy, in their everyday lives and especially through work that was once (and still is in many respects) rendered a taboo for women in very conservative Saudi households.

Entrepreneurship as a field is perhaps the opposite of conventionalism and conservatism; it requires the agency, self-sufficiency or autonomy of a person to establish, among other things, novel and useful business ideas. I thus endeavoured to unveil how the contention between self-autonomy and dependence (on male guardians before and during, and most likely after, the Saudi policy shifts) is practiced or achieved through Saudi female entrepreneurship. My limitations in understanding Saudi female entrepreneurs' daily experiences was compensated by referring to family and friends and academic studies investigating female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, my shifting worldview, my personal questions (about reality, knowledge, and identity) and cultural influences and knowledge impacted this study's interview questions and interviewing process.

Further, drawing upon feminist methods in interviewing, I aimed at establishing consciousness-raising about the untold stories and experiences of Saudi female entrepreneurs that might be misrepresented or distorted in media discourses. I am particularly interested in women's everyday realities or experiences in terms of how they conceive of and practice entrepreneurship with regards to extant discursive representations. I also endeavoured to reveal the possibility of existing marginalised groups of female entrepreneurs due to factors, besides gender, such as social class or ethnicity, which can be viewed from an intersectional lens, but this is beyond the scope of this study. Women entrepreneurs' stories and experiences can be an alternative view to the extant media representation, which can be deemed as "construction from below" as Foucault (1977) once stressed that power is omnipresent, and thus women can have the power to construct their own entrepreneurial identities and everyday realities. Interviewing was the main and only method for the respective study in terms of analysing how women construct female entrepreneurship. It does not merely reveal women's experiences, but also, it sheds light on the context in which these experiences are constructed. Context also plays a vital role within this study as the contextuality of experiences, conceptions or practices, such as entrepreneurship, has considerable implications upon how these are perceived and thus constructed. In-depth interviews were specifically conducted as they tend to be issue-oriented and focus on a particular topic, which enabled understanding the women's subjective experiences. Further, open-ended, semi-structured interviews were employed. I led the interview with a list of questions (see Appendix D), but in many instances, the discussion was expanded that led me to ask new but pertinent questions about their experiences.

With regards to the total number of interviewees, nineteen women entrepreneurs were interviewed. They were sent several documents prior to the interview took place such as my academic background, a brief guide into the research and a participant consent form. I decided to stop contacting further women for interviews when the answers became somewhat repetitive, and I could find an evident pattern amongst the women's answers. Some interviews lasted up to two to three hours, and a few, however, lasted thirty minutes or less due to either the women's commitments or communication style; that is, providing very minimal answers. Probing was used to deal with this limitation. The initial plan was to hold the interviews face to face, but due to location constraints

(being mostly in the UK and the women in KSA), the majority of the interviews were calls through FaceTime and one was face to face when I went to Jeddah where I was invited to Interviewee 10's house, which was also her workplace. It is also worth mentioning that it was not the intention to essentialise women as a group, but rather to highlight that there do not exist sufficient researches about the entrepreneurial experiences of Saudi women who happen to be grouped according to their biological traits and the similar barriers they go through by virtue of being women. This is a very radical argument to state within a highly conservative context as it can be read that *women* as a group do not "naturally" exist but rather are socially constructed.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

This chapter described the types of approaches and methods deployed in literature to investigate entrepreneurship, gender and female entrepreneurship and women entrepreneurs in national contexts. Thanks to the wide spread of female entrepreneurship as a socio-economic global phenomenon, the literature has expanded its approaches from utilising narrow methods such as quantitative ones into using qualitative methods. The latter provide in-depth accounts of women entrepreneurs' experiences and enable expansion of our understandings of the field in general, which is the basic premise of the respective research. The chapter also outlined some studies researching women's magazines some of which call for an expansion of methods from textual analysis into researching women's readership. These studies, echoing mine, suggest that women's magazines tend to perpetuate gendered ideologies while also are perceived as an agent for social change. This chapter also outlined my methodological approach, methods and samples to investigate the subject at hand. What follows are the findings from the Critical Discourse Analysis of the chosen magazines sample.

## **Chapter 7: The Representation of Saudi Women Entrepreneurs in Saudi Magazines – A Critical Discourse Analysis**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The respective chapter delves into and examines the discursive practices through which Saudi women entrepreneurs are constructed in a selection of Saudi Arabia's magazines. I analysed the lexical choices, ascriptions, arguments, emphases and suppressions made by the magazines and the ways in which women are positioned within the texts. This chapter also looks into the embedded underlying ideologies and power relations that have vital implications upon constructing Saudi women entrepreneurs' personas and practices between 2016 and 2018. The findings are discussed by adopting Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis to place the texts and respective constructions of Saudi female entrepreneurship in the wider socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic milieus to make these constructions more intelligible. The discourses derived from the *meso* analysis will be woven into pivotal ideological frames, or meta discourses, such as patriarchy, capitalism, religion and the family, at the *macro* level discussed in Chapter 11. The latter is to highlight the situatedness of this thesis as it concerns itself with women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia during a transformative juncture in the country's socio-economic history. The transformation at a socio-economic and cultural (e.g. art, media, literature and entertainment) levels are rapidly increasing yet religious and traditional values have a long way to go to meet such rapid expansions. The analysis commences with the *meso* level and supports its ensuing arguments by exemplifying and drawing upon texts from the *micro* analysis (see Appendix C), then extrapolates and discusses the findings at the *macro* level.

What is generally inferred through the analysed portrayals of Saudi female entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurship is a field that is conventionally Western, embedded within a capitalist economy in which free markets and voluntary exchange occur. Thus, its representation within a Saudi context, let alone with women, where an autocratic, religious and patriarchal system is at play, is in contention with a secular,

Western and democratic phenomenon such as entrepreneurship or indeed a democratic capitalist system. That is, the ways in which entrepreneurship is either conceived or practiced in KSA, to work against its quintessential perception and practices, confirms the malleability of the field and hence the socially constructed “nature” of it. This depiction also enables consideration of the changing structure that is of Saudi Arabia, from one that is of being confined to one that is open and to a certain extent more liberated and especially with regards to gender roles.

## **7.2. Meso Analysis**

### **Theme One: Women’s Positions in the Text**

#### ***As Pioneers of Businesses***

The espoused word for “entrepreneurs” in Arabic translates to “pioneers of businesses”. The meaning in Arabic seems to be adopted in the magazines, and most probably in Saudi society, to represent entrepreneurs from different fields such as medicine, engineering, art and business who were “first” in either establishing a novel business, inventing new products and services in Saudi Arabia; who were the “first” in winning certain awards in their respective fields; or who were “first” in participating in national or global events or competitions. That is, entrepreneurship seems to be synonymous with being the “first” to establishing or inventing products or services, and/or being the first to win a certain prize locally or globally as a Saudi woman.

This type of *emphasis* can be suggested to be a discursive strategy to highlight Saudi women’s capabilities either locally or globally. The Saudi media is currently saturated with this type of depiction, the celebration of the women “pioneers” or the “firsts to” (see Table 4 below), to re-sculpt Saudi Arabia’s global image in the Western eyes with regards to the subjugation of Saudi women and to further dim the light on tyrannical practices or policies. This celebration of the Saudi woman pioneer/entrepreneur can also be conjectured to be a form of strategy to further encourage Saudi women’s economic participation as the female labour force participation still remains at low levels as stated previously in Chapter 2. This media celebration and encouragement is parallel to the country’s Vision 2030 that aims at increasing women’s economic practices to help boost Saudi’s economy, and therefore, such media exposure upon extant Saudi women entrepreneurs can increase potential women’s propensity to

partake in the economic realm and more specifically, entrepreneurship. For references to pioneering from the interviews, see Appendix E., Table 17.

References to Success	Quotation	Source
<b>Pioneering</b>	“Ruthana Hadhrawi, a Saudi entrepreneur who is also the founder and director of “Tana’s Touch Tablescapes and Design,” a new innovation that operates under the motto of “Creating Memories Rather Than Settings.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Nagro is the first Saudi woman to hold an ICF Certified Coach in Performance Development qualification from Gallup International. She is amongst the first batch of Saudi students who graduated in coaching and received their license from the Canadian Erickson organization.” “Ekrami is the founding member of the first, non-profit, traveling bookshop in the world.” “Al-Hamad is the first Saudi female board member of the Saudi Arabian Motorsport Federation. She is also a member of the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission based in Paris and the first Saudi woman to drive in the Formula One.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Alwalaan’s brand not only specialises in the variety of coffee blends but made easy the brewing by launching the first automatic Arabic coffee maker.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Nouf Alsaleem, the Co-Founder of homemade food delivery app Mathaqi, has been highlighted as one of the women paving the way for success in Saudi Arabia.”  “The game changers’ level of achievement in their various fields was evaluated via the awards they have garnered.”  “The Riyadh-based Mathaqi, which was the first company in Saudi Arabia to introduce home food service on the go.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine

Table 4: References to Pioneering – Magazines

### *As Confident, Autonomous and Passionate*

The women entrepreneurs are depicted in ways that construct them as autonomous, experts in their fields and with passion and purpose. This can be a counter narrative on a global scale since women in Saudi Arabia are perceived as to hold or entail no agency, and as being dependent, confined and subjugated. These media depictions can operate to dispel these ubiquitous ways in which Saudi women are being perceived or even portrayed in Western media. In some instances; however, such as in *Destination Jeddah*, it cannot be determined whether the women in fact have agencies as barriers that can potentially hinder their businesses are not discussed. It cannot be then established how women utilised their agencies to navigate through these barriers. This aspirational positive image, as discussed previously, contributes to establishing women as autonomous and present entrepreneurship as a seamless field despite obscuring fundamental processes, which include navigating their context in which structural barriers can be incurred. This omission of barriers, probably specific to women, also constructs Saudi Arabia as the new and reformed as strategized in Vision 2030. Contributing to forging the autonomous and agentic female entrepreneur within the magazines, is dedicating full articles (print and online pages) to the women's businesses to voice their entrepreneurial experiences. This can also enable individualisation as discussed in the *micro* analysis (see Appendix C., 1.4).

It can be argued that the discursive strategy at play, in regard to the latter representations, is the *quoting* strategy through which decisions about who is quoted, what is quoted, at what length, and the balance between the journalists/editors' input and the women's input are made. By quoting women sharing their entrepreneurial experiences, the magazines are constructing the conception of entrepreneurship with the women's input. This strategy to incorporate women's conceptions and experiences is sculpting a type of freedom of speech and especially of women's speech that was once muted. This strategy can be adopted to showcase institutions' readiness, such as that of the Saudi Ministry of Media that controls media content and distribution in Saudi Arabia and internationally, to enable women's voices and expression. Yet this "freedom" is questioned when there are vast restrictions to Saudi media itself in terms of its content and tone. The type of questions that the women are being asked by the magazines also confine this freedom to express themselves, which is a projection of the highly governed media environment in the country. It is also integral to mention

that even if two of the magazines (*Entrepreneurs KSA* and *About Her*) asked questions revolving around barriers and impediments, most of the women appeared reserved with their answers as it is a common practice not to convey negative opinions or stances with regards to the structural context (i.e. the State). Therefore, this utopian and idealistic representation can be suggested to be a mere representation, a performativity of the status-quo that infer, although there are socio-cultural and economic reforms, freedom of expression is still lacking especially in the media.

### ***As Confined and Yet Detached from Domesticity***

All magazines, except for *About Her*, do not explicitly allude to the women entrepreneur's domestic or private realm; that is, they do not ask questions revolving around their domestic roles. There is rarely any reference in *Destination Jeddah* and *Entrepreneurs KSA* by the magazines to the women's home responsibilities or their stereotypical roles as wives, mothers, caregivers and so on. The private familial setting is not highlighted in these two magazines in the forms of questions revolving around the domestic sphere. In the Western context, and especially in female entrepreneurship discourses, the home is often mentioned, but women in the Western world are deemed in mass discourses more liberated than Saudi women. Then the separation of Saudi women from the domestic realm by the two magazines can be a discursive way to liberate them from these conventional domestic roles. Another speculation is that Saudi women in higher socio-economic levels have house staff that do the house chores; therefore, it would be redundant to mention these as interfering with their entrepreneurial endeavours. However, this cannot be a universal representation as it can be assumed, through the previously delineated female unemployment rates and especially for educated women, that many of these women either choose or prioritise marriage or reside in the domestic realm; they can as well be confined by their families to do so. There is significance to what the magazines are portraying, as these construct a general discourse about Saudi Arabia and especially that of women, and these depictions are disseminated not only locally, but also globally where perceptions are forged about the country. Readers should care about what are portrayed in magazines as these portrayals shape a mediated identity of entrepreneurship that many do not resonate with and subsequently marginalise them as not legitimate entrepreneurs. These perceptions and mediated images are one of the main substrates on which



international relations are based upon. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Saudi Arabia is aiming at bolstering political relations through favourable depictions amid international condemnation to certain mediated events.

With regards to the magazines, there is a striking detachment of the woman's business persona with her personal and private one, as if they do not intertwine or influence one another, or indeed as if there does not exist a family that she needs to attend to. This is unusual as Saudi Arabia since its establishment has always been a conventional, tribal and religious country that instilled within its citizens myriad of religious and cultural values one of which is familial ones that encompass women's onuses in preserving the family and thus society. This separation of the public and private, where the latter has always been conceived as the domain of the female, seems to infer the breakage of this obsolete structure that is of KSA; presenting a new form of Saudi Arabia that seems to liberate women from their conventional roles as mothers, housewives or caregivers. These reforms, or the mere act of separating the public and private realm, can be seized by certain women in Saudi Arabia who have the support of their progressive families. Although the male guardianship system is loosened with regards to women working, there are many women who still remain under the shadows of their conservative families unable to work or leave their domestic realms rendering these reforms as ostensible. That is, it can be said that only certain groups in certain cities, such as Jeddah, who either have the backings of their family names and who are fortunate to have supportive families can actually benefit from these reforms, and for instance, become entrepreneurs (i.e. these are the beneficiaries of the economic reforms and are then the main building blocks of the economic developments anticipated by Vision 2030). Other women, conversely, from lower socio-economic statuses or even within conventional settings, undertake domestic duties. Therefore, the former types of women are the true audiences of the analysed magazines depictions.

Conversely, it can also be contended that these women entrepreneurs would not benefit from such portrayals, of separating their personal experiences from their entrepreneurial ones, as a certain type of entrepreneurship is being reinforced, that is of the quintessential "masculine" version, which does not usually ascribe domestic

experiences to entrepreneurial ventures. This can be inferred in two ways that lead to one deduction: first, the depicted women are not seen as their unique individual selves, who most probably have families to attend to and abide by their essentialist roles, nevertheless, there are no references to children, husbands, domestic chores and so on that can play an imperative role in shaping their business endeavours (this is however highlighted in *About Her* magazine, see Table 12). Consequently, this denies women the possibility of establishing themselves as a solid group who can challenge the status quo with their unique entrepreneurial experiences given that there exists ascribed gender-roles in Saudi society. The second inference is that if indeed a masculine-version of entrepreneurship is being reconstructed through the two magazines, these women who undertake entrepreneurial ventures are seen as a special group of Saudi women and thus entrepreneurship as a field to be performed by individuals who are eligible to inhabit the set of commonly-associated entrepreneurial aptitudes (mostly constructed as masculine) mentioned in entrepreneurship discourses. Therefore, being a woman in itself is not significant as anyone with the required set of entrepreneurial attributes can become one, and thus, women as a group are denied the privilege to establish themselves as a solid group who can defy the conventional discourse of the masculine eccentric entrepreneur. It can, hence, be evident that the women are not conveying true instances of their experiences and that the two magazines do not intend to “listen” to their true narratives given the element of suppression. The latter, *suppression/exclusion*, is another form of discursive practice in relation to the respective theme.

To summarise the ways in which the suppression strategy has been utilised, the two magazines (*Destination Jeddah* and *Entrepreneurs KSA*) are obscuring, perhaps inadvertently, the women’s “realities” and experiences in the home and through this suppression, the magazines are constructing female entrepreneurship as detached from the women’s everyday personal experiences that in themselves can have vital implications upon constructing their entrepreneurial experiences. Indeed, the private and public are two divergent realities operating within a dialectical opposition as inferred by these representations. By suppressing the domestic realm, the context in which the women are depicted is then a liberalising and changing one that is “re-branding” women’s role in Saudi Arabian society. As such, the intended ideology can prominently revolve around women’s agency and empowerment despite this agency

can be rendered futile or negligible if patriarchal structures or notions of entrepreneurship are being reinforced and promoted. Since the dominant element amongst the three magazines is suppressing the domestic realm, the occurring relations of power cannot be of an equal one (between women and the magazines) although they, the women, are observed to be expressing their business experiences and are, presumably, simultaneously conceptualising female entrepreneurship through their narratives. It can be argued nonetheless, that these featured women entrepreneurs have over other Saudi female citizens the opportunity and thus power, given the privileges of either their education, family background, social status, accessibility and so on, to seize extant economic and cultural reforms, such as increased media attention, to help shape and disseminate the State's intended agenda for entrepreneurial activity. That is, the portrayed female entrepreneurs seem to have power when they are acquiescent to these agendas.

### **Theme Two: A Saudi Perspective of Entrepreneurship**

There is an overarching focus on words such as *Saudi*, *female*, *youth* and there are also instances in which the three magazines represent female members of the Royal Family as entrepreneurs. First, and with regards to the reiteration of *Saudi*, it is found to be highly associated with, or attached to, the female business owner. There are many instances where the magazines had to identify the entrepreneur or the business itself as being Saudi<sup>57</sup>. It can be deduced that there is a promotion of a national identity discourse by the magazines, which also encapsulates within it a perspective on entrepreneurship. Some of the women also identified themselves as being Saudi when introducing themselves: "...I am a young Saudi with a varied background..." (*Destination Jeddah*, 2016), which can infer that national identity is tied with the conception of self, or with the sense of self, or perhaps it is the national framing of the magazine. Another possibility is that it is a determination by Saudi women to 'comply' with nationalist discourses to be seen as legitimate in a publication. This discourse of "oneness", belongingness and collectiveness is achieved through the discursive practice of emphasis or indeed the emphasis of a Saudi national identity. What is being tacitly constructed simultaneously is the discourse of *otherness*. There is no explicit

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<sup>57</sup>For examples, see appendix C "over lexicalisation".

indication of the latter in the magazines, but the use of a very specific profile of Saudi women infers that a certain type of Saudi women (e.g. Saudi, mostly young, educated, cultured, ambitious and successful) can become entrepreneurs while other women who do not embody such categorisation can be cast as others. As much as national identity can be vital for a country's unity, preservation of cultural identity and nation building, it can also establish a division among individuals who do not necessarily identify with or abide by the nations' basic tenets or principles. This attachment of the Saudi identity with female entrepreneurs is establishing a Saudi perspective on entrepreneurship; a Saudi-way of conceiving and enacting entrepreneurial ventures that is counter to the endemic Western depictions of entrepreneurship. Seemingly, the magazines do not abide by the prevalent Western discourses when representing entrepreneurship by attaching it to "Saudi". In fact, there does not exist a clear elaboration on what entrepreneurship means, except in one section in *About Her* online magazine, and unless only expressed by the women's experiences. What is "Saudi" about these depictions is not merely the deployment of the nationality, but also the Saudi cultural cues that are attached to the Saudi women entrepreneurs and hence the overall representation of the field in the country. For example, many of the Saudi women in the magazines are wearing the traditional cultural attire, the Abaya, which is a symbolism of national identity that is ascribed to the field when represented in conjunction to one another. Not only is the Abaya or the robe a cultural cue, but it is also deemed by many Saudis a religious symbol. Then, the representation of entrepreneurship in Saudi discourses are, in this case, detached from Western secular conceptions of entrepreneurship since there is an underlying meaning when representing the field with religious and cultural connotations that forge a specific Saudi discourse of entrepreneurship.

With regards to the use of *female* or *woman*, most of the articles display images of the women and state their names, therefore, it can be quite clear that a female is being represented. At the *micro* level of analysis (Appendix C), there is the over-lexicalisation of the gender specificity attached to the career name, business type, award names, target audience and so on. To further elaborate, there are numerous mentions of the lemmas "female" and "woman/women" before, for instance, the word *entrepreneur* or *business* (see Appendix C). It is worthy to mention that this study also falls into the trap of over-lexicalisation due to its prevalent use of *female*

*entrepreneurship* and *female entrepreneurs*. In the magazines, most of the women entrepreneurs are depicted as individuals even though some of their businesses can fall under social entrepreneurship with a collectivist ideal. This is significant as it detaches the Saudi women from the endemic associations of being a dependent member of either society or the family in everyday trivial decisions, for example. It is (the promotion of individualism), however, unusual as Saudi Arabia can be deemed as a collectivist society. Group values, such as preserving the family and society's norms, seem to prevail and that Saudi individuals' sense of self is derived from socio-cultural discourses that ascribe each gender, for instance, with expected roles or performances. It is also striking in that many women are not entirely independent in Saudi Arabia given that some females are still tied to some aspects of the male guardianship policy and have not been able to freely move around, until the driving ban lift in 2018. Individualism, nevertheless, requires the autonomy of a person, not to mention the existence of women who are dictated by the conservatism of their families. The latter resonates with the type of socio-political and economic structure that is of KSA, which is deemed as being established at the level of the family and then transmitted to the wider socio-political milieu.

With regards to the conception of the *entrepreneur* inferred by the magazines through individualising women, some reflect the conventional conceptions of an entrepreneur put forward in the entrepreneurship literature with respect to independence and individual sovereignty. For example, the magazines highlight the women's successes and achievements with little or no emphasis on structural factors. Specifically, the literature, as seen in Chapter 3, suggests that entrepreneurs are catalysts and agents of change within a business context who perceive profit opportunities, and initiate actions that answer market deficiencies and fill unsatisfied business needs (Bull et al., 1995 p.3). As such, human agency and independence is required for a woman in Saudi Arabia, or any entrepreneur for that matter, to encapsulate the latter attributes and achieve economic disruption. However, not all Saudi women in the country can achieve this level of individual sovereignty and therefore being an entrepreneur is reserved for the very few. This casts a doubt on the extent to which this entrepreneurship is "real" given its exclusivity. This exclusivity is manifest in the sampled Saudi magazines depiction of a certain profile of women as individualistic and autonomous (despite being a conventional collectivist society). I can argue that these

featured women can be rendered entrepreneurs in light of the literature's standards when autonomy and (an extent of) freedom are concerned.

The gender ascription to the career of entrepreneurship can be another form of emphasis as a discursive strategy to forge the conception as well as the perception around Saudi female entrepreneurship. The emphasis on attaching a gender before *entrepreneurs* or after *business* can thus convey that there is *female entrepreneurship* and *male entrepreneurship* and hence a binary male and female way of enacting or conceiving entrepreneurship, or that entrepreneurship is conventionally male and that it is the norm, and by highlighting "female" it can suggest that it is unique or "other" to this norm. This was evident in the magazine *Entrepreneurs KSA* as it has a general section on entrepreneurs (with no gender specificity) that only features male entrepreneurs while another section is called "Them and Business", the feminine "them" in Arabic, that only features women entrepreneurs.

One speculation is that entrepreneurship is gendered in Saudi Arabia due to first, the divergent gender-role ascriptions to both genders that are then extrapolated upon business identities and practices and second, the different circumstances each gender incur either personally, socially, legislatively or economically, with respect to establishing a business, construct female entrepreneurship as divergent and "other" to the male-associated entrepreneurship. Alternatively, by virtue of being an essentialist society with regards to gender roles, this classification of entrepreneurship based on the sexes seems natural and thus not questioned. Being a masculine and patriarchal culture that is of KSA, it can be expected to observe the permeation of the "masculine" notions of entrepreneurship that is evidently related to men, success, competitiveness and so on, which was established, as alluded to above, by representing only males and their entrepreneurial ventures under the general section of entrepreneurship in *Entrepreneurs KSA*. In a nut shell, the national culture, the political environment, the socio-cultural realm, in addition to endogenous factors such as personal (essentialist) tenets or circumstances, affect entrepreneurial behaviour, engagement and activity among female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia that can explain the separation of both genders' entrepreneurial experiences and hence the gendering of entrepreneurship and its representation.

Also, by merely the positive tones of the magazines as highlighted in *theme 2*, they are celebratory of the women's entrepreneurial achievements and are aiming at encouraging further participation by representing role models for potential entrepreneurs, especially females. This resonates with Western discourses discussed in Chapter 3, that confirm the success bias and positivity depicted around entrepreneurship.<sup>58</sup> However, Saudi men still dominate the economic sector while Saudi women remain unemployed or predominantly choose to partake in domestic chores, but the statistical gender differences in entrepreneurship participation is not inferred in the magazines. There does not exist an explicit percentage of Saudi housewives, but there are staggering figures of Saudi females aged between 25 and 29 who are registered as the highest rate of 41.1% of the total unemployed Saudi females (431,460) and around three quarters (71.2%) of these individuals hold university degrees (GASTAT, 2018). Such percentages are indicative of wider personal, socio-cultural and economic issues as these young females represent an untapped economic potential for the development sought by Vision 2030. The magazines however with the exponential exposure on Saudi women and their businesses are altering this rhetoric of the underemployment of Saudi women. Varshney (2019) highlighted the socio-cultural implications to these low levels of Saudi female labour force participation and argued that Saudi women's lives, conventionally, revolved around the domestic setting (household chores) while Saudi men have been the primary breadwinners. Despite the emergence, in the last few years, of Saudi women in the economic realm and society's encouragement to Saudi female education, they still incur challenges related to cultural and religious values (Bahkali, 2012 cited in Varshney, 2019 p.360) especially with regards to their engagement in the work sphere. Traditions are deeply rooted in Saudi Arabia's socio-economic infrastructure and consequently, women's labour force engagement remains negligible and especially in sectors others than education and healthcare (Saqib, Aggarwal and Rashid, 2016). Varshney (2019) supplements, and as argued previously in this chapter, that the Saudi culture's primary focus is of the family and that a woman's priority is to be a wife and a mother. It is more precisely believed that women's roles in Saudi Arabia is to

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<sup>58</sup> Historically in Saudi Arabia, embarking on an entrepreneurial venture, or working in general, was reserved to the male figure of the family and women resided in the domestic realm where they are stereotypically deemed to belong.

maintain the structure of the family and hence of society (Saqib et. al, 2016). The latter can be one reason explaining the high number of unemployed young Saudi females<sup>59</sup> with higher education degrees, which is their prioritising of being wives and possibly mothers. The emphasis on women's domesticity and identities as mothers are also manifest in the sampled magazines (see Table 12). Specifically, only *About Her* magazine asks questions around motherhood and domestic roles, and in *Entrepreneurs KSA*, the interviewed women allude to these roles. I found only one instance in *Destination Jeddah* in which the woman was also identified as a mother.

Generally, it can be deduced from the analysed media discourses that there is a celebration and recognition for female entrepreneurship as a phenomenon that manifests the occurring liberalising processes under the current State. That is, the over exposure of certain female entrepreneurs in Saudi media outlets is a form of transmitting the reformed political and socio-economic structure that is of KSA, both locally and globally. There is thus an evident ideology of liberalism, not only evident through encouraging women in the labour force, but also through some of the ways they are represented in the media (with non-conventional attire that is detached from the Saudi culture). Liberalism is under attack from conservative Saudi citizens, but the current State is reinforcing a moderate religious context in which the economic agenda can be achieved.

With regards to age, there is also a prominent focus upon how young the female entrepreneurs are and the importance of encouraging and supporting the youth in the country (see Appendix C). This focus on the women's age is either depicted by highlighting their ages next to their names or stating how young they were when they established their business or won awards in their respective fields: "Saudi Arabia is home to number of rising stars, young women from all walks of life and sectors who are leading the way" (*About Her* magazine), another text to exemplify the latter is in this title: "this young Saudi entrepreneur started her successful, award-winning app for a great cause" (*About Her* magazine). Such focus upon the women's young ages can portray them as exceptional figures that are unique to the norm, which is more

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<sup>59</sup> Women's decision to work has to be a joint one in the family and that they should ensure to maintain a work-family balance but gravitate more towards fulfilling familial obligations (Varshney, 2019).



mature women residing in the domestic realm. It also infers their determination, courage and confidence to embark upon a risky venture while defeating the odds. This can be seen as a form of encouragement to the extant young population of Saudi Arabia that is 70% under the age of thirty as per the Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman's statement (McKernan, 2017). This emphasis upon youth is not only prevalent in Saudi media discourses but it is also one of the main pillars of the Vision 2030 initiative. In particular, there are numerous state-established programs that aim at building the capacities of both men and women in the country by investing in their education and training to be equipped for future jobs. One of the various initiatives is the collaboration between the Mohammad Bin Salman College, the Ministry of Communications and IT and Misk Foundation to place local entrepreneurial ventures in accelerator programs as well as funding the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority to support extant and potential entrepreneurs. Being young himself, the Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman is a leader that the current young generations can identify with and hence; being their voice through Vision 2030 enables the country to entice the potentials of the well-educated, ambitious, newly trained and progressive attitudes to help embody the reforms and move the country towards its economic objectives.

Nonetheless, analysis of the magazines suggests that these reforms are confined to a certain group in Saudi Arabia. The issue of conservatism is one that remains subsumed within the privacy of the domestic realms, and therefore, young women within these settings may not have the opportunity, despite most likely having the ability, to benefit from such reforms and become entrepreneurs. This showcases that deeper issues, such as extreme conservatism that can indeed subjugate women to primitive forms of living, cannot be addressed since they are obscured. Merely prominent issues that appear on the façade such as forms of extremism and low female employment are hence being addressed. Then, there may be a correlation between this low engagement in the labour force and the conservatism of the families or indeed the conservatism as to relate to women's roles in society. Saudi women are now able to work without a male's consent; despite this, the widely engrained socio-cultural values and conservative mindsets that hinder some Saudi women's economic engagement are left unaddressed. Therefore, the women in such circumstances, and especially of

younger ages, remain underrepresented, and only certain females are enabled to become entrepreneurs - perhaps due to the privilege of being embedded within a progressive family or having autonomy over resources that enable entrepreneurial activity.

Social class is also implicated within the “Saudi perspective” of entrepreneurship. This is established by representing female royalty as entrepreneurs: “Princess Reema: Entrepreneur, Social Activist, Table Tennis Champ” (*About Her* magazine), which are not commonly found in the Western discourses of entrepreneurship that highlight the “rags to riches” narrative. This also infers the privileges that enable entrepreneurship within Saudi Arabia; these are social rankings, wealth, accessibility, networks, family name and so on. Indeed, entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia is reserved for the elite, or at least the mediated perception and conception of it is reserved for them. From the above and through the discursive strategy of emphasis, entrepreneurship in KSA is tied to national identity, gender, age and social class and is specifically aligned to legitimated women and thus, very exclusive.

### **Theme Three: Positivity and Aspiration**

This section calls for drawing upon Martin and Rose’s (2003) *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause* to make intelligible the ways in which attitudes are being negotiated in the chosen magazines’ texts and hence highlight the interactive “nature” of discourse as negotiation. The latter authors put forward a system of interpersonal meanings deemed as *appraisal* to negotiate social relationships or inform the reader/listener about attitudes with regards to people or things. *Attitudes* concerns itself with evaluating people’s characters (judgement), their feelings (affect) and placing value upon things (appreciation). Such appraisals or evaluations can be more or less amplified. The attitudes can be of the magazines or the featured female entrepreneurs in the magazines, which highlights the *source*. *Appraisal* therefore entails three aspects: expressing attitudes, how they are amplified and the source of attitudes (Martin and Rose, 2003).

### *Praising Women's Characters and Businesses*

This section concerns itself with the magazines' attitudes towards the female entrepreneurs. It, more specifically, analyses (through drawing upon the magazines' lexical choices) the ways in which the magazines appraise the women by judging their characters and placing value upon their businesses. Before delving into the analysis, it is vital to note that judging people's character entails both *personal judgement* of admiration or criticism, and *moral judgement* of praise and condemnation (Martin and Rose, 2003). These can be either explicit or implicit judgements (Martin and Rose, 2003). Also, "appreciating things" can be either positive or negative. With regards to the analysed magazines, the women entrepreneurs and their businesses are depicted in a positive way through adopting (commonly perceived) positive words such as *confident, passionate, beautiful, fun, fierce, fearless* and so on, that highlight the explicit positive personal judgement (or admiration) of the magazines upon the women entrepreneurs' characters: "Najla AlBassam is the *genius* behind Haya Design Studio and Kartt & Co." (*About Her* magazine, my emphasis). There are also instances in which the magazines depict positive moral judgement when appraising moral aspects of the women's characters: "her *honest*, open and conversational approach..." (*About Her* magazine, my emphasis). Further, the magazines' choices of words depict explicit positive *appreciation* or value ascribed to their businesses such as writing: "great cause" (*About Her* magazine). It can also be suggested that the espoused words, such as *great, scintillating, genius, brilliant, exceptional*, are attitudinal lexis words that include degrees of intensity or *force* to showcase how strongly the magazines admire the women. That is, these words are used to amplify the magazines' admiration of the women's characters and their businesses. Another way through which the magazines admire, yet tacitly in the ensuing instances, the women's characters and businesses is through highlighting their successes and achievements<sup>60</sup>.

Such depictions highlight Saudi women's capabilities in the entrepreneurial or economic arena in general, which can have a variety of implications upon the Saudi context with regards to women. First, they obscure barriers (whether social, economic or legislative) to women's participation in the entrepreneurial arena, and they imply that

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<sup>60</sup> For examples, see table 2 Appendix C.

structural elements revolving around women in Saudi Arabia are loosening and hence certain women are more inclined to become entrepreneurs. This can be evident through the higher numbers of women engaged in entrepreneurship, in the economic realm in general, and the increased governmental initiatives to facilitate women's economic participation, whether in the public or private sectors. Second, these representations can unveil the loosening social barriers upon women engaging in what was deemed and reserved for male counterparts (the economic/public arena). There seems to be a wider social acceptance either by the families themselves or Saudi society for women to engage professionally with "foreign" men, that is, men who are not family members such as business partners, suppliers, customers and so on. There is also an increased socio-cultural acceptance and policy adjustments with regards to situating women in the public domain such as the media on which women can be recognised for their achievements. Third, these achievements per se can imply the women's changing "realities" or perceptions with regards to "acceptable" gender-specific roles that can entail working at both the home and the workplace. Not only changes among women, but also Saudi society and its acceptance to these multifaceted "feminine" roles that can entail working alongside men in the public domain while preserving the family. That is not to state that women are starting to refrain from their familial obligations, but to highlight that they are capable of leading both, the house and the business. Finally, these inclinations to participate in the entrepreneurial realm, as well as well-achieving in it, suggest that women started to believe in their capabilities to work in a formerly "masculine" domain. Some researches such as of Lavelle and Al Sheikh (2013) suggested that women in Saudi Arabia incur low levels of self-assertiveness or confidence with regards to the workplace, yet the portrayals I analysed suggest otherwise.

### ***Entrepreneurship in KSA - An Aspirational Dream***

Another way through which *positivity and aspiration* is portrayed in the magazines is highlighting, by the featured female entrepreneurs, that entrepreneurship is an aspiration to be pursued and a "dream to become true" and one that yields success and fulfilment: "deep down nothing made me happier than witnessing my dream come to life" (*About Her* magazine). Expressing positive emotions by the interviewees contributes in representing entrepreneurship as a favourable and positive pursuit: "I

love that I can push the boundaries” (*About Her* magazine). Another states: “I’m extremely proud that my country chose me to be one of the women to set the record straight” (*About Her* magazine). Family and employees are also acknowledged by the women in the magazines as support systems that facilitated the establishment and success of their careers, and who also contribute in making the embarking on entrepreneurship a positive experience: “I have to mention my current support system: my husband...he is why this is possible.” (*About Her* magazine). It can be, therefore, deduced that tacit persuasion is being espoused as a discursive strategy to paint a positive and favourable image about female entrepreneurship as a venture that yields with it aspired outcomes such as autonomy, success, recognition, confidence, respect and so on. These values are normally the foundation of a Western capitalist and democratic system, which lie in contention to the traditional and reserved values in KSA such as collectivism, privacy, “decency” and conformity. Another way through which the magazines are constructing a positive discourse revolving around female entrepreneurship is via enabling women to articulate positive aspects of their businesses while being interviewed by the magazines. Thus, the magazines are attempting to operate as an inclusive platform through which women can voice their own views and opinions about their business ventures. This strategy is a discursive strategy that socially constructs the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship through the magazines and women’s statements. That is, as Martin and Rose (2003) would put forward, the *sources* of the attitudes on female entrepreneurship are from both the magazines and the featured (interviewed) female entrepreneurs.

Overall, since there is minimal discussion on barriers across the magazines, the seamlessness and positivity revolving around female entrepreneurship is being discursively constructed through suppression or exclusion. For example, in *Destination Jeddah*, only positive aspects of the women’s businesses and their achievements are mentioned. In particular, these positive representations are obscuring the discourses of struggle or incurred barriers by female entrepreneurs in KSA. There does not seem to exist any accounts of challenges and troubles when embarking upon an entrepreneurial career, such as a lack of financing, experience and human capital, or indeed complications of institutional policies, for instance. The overarching idea that is being constructed is that female entrepreneurship is a seamless journey with smoothened barriers, which chimes with the new socio-economic liberalisation

discourse envisaged in Vision 2030. The reason for the latter may have to do with either being asked directly to describe positive aspects of their businesses, or as a utilised strategy by the women to promote their businesses (e.g. to encourage investors and/or potential female entrepreneurs). This relates to Western notions of positive feminism in business in terms of increasing the participation as well as the representation of women in the business sector and creating a more equal economy by eliminating forms of gender discrimination in the country. This is achieved through the changing policies in Saudi Arabia through which the country is aiming to create more proximity with Western women rights' ideals and sculpting a legitimate ameliorated image with regards to Saudi women's positions. At the heart of such encouragement and positive portrayals is the economic agenda of Vision 2030 that cannot be achieved unless Saudi women are engaged in the realm. The country is spending millions on Saudi women's education, through scholarships, and it would be a loss of investment should women choose (or are obliged) to stay at home.

The main ideology that is woven between the positive and encouraging words is Saudi women's liberation. It is also a depiction of the loosened policies around them and reflects the reformed socio-cultural milieu that is smoothing the paths for women to engage in the entrepreneurial arena or economic one in general. With regards to the types of power implicated within the texts, it can be posited that the magazines hold power over the readers through these embedded and implicit capitalist ideologies of work, wealth, success and autonomy that revolve around entrepreneurship, as many readers, presumably, would not have the knowledge nor experience to forge a conception about entrepreneurial ventures unless they were entrepreneurs themselves. The magazines thus forge a mediated version of female entrepreneurship, one that numerous individuals would suspect to be true.

### **7.3. Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings of the critical discourse analysis conducted on the chosen magazines sample. It demonstrated the discursive strategies utilised and ideologies embedded within and underpinning the analysed magazines' representations of Saudi women entrepreneurs. In that, how the women are socially constructed through the chosen media discourses. The chapter then outlined the main themes derived from

the analysis to showcase that there are commonalities between how Saudi female entrepreneurship is represented in each magazine, which is in an overarchingly positive, nationalistic and attractive way. These depictions, as concluded earlier in the chapter, overshadow real entrepreneurial experiences that encompass barriers, failure, risk and challenges, which are discussed later in Chapter 9. The following chapter discusses the interview findings that highlight entrepreneurial experiences outside mediated, and most likely unrealistic, forms.

## **Chapter 8: Interview Findings and Analysis – Part One**

### **8.1. Introduction**

This chapter explains the ways in which entrepreneurship, as both a concept and a field, either perpetuates or deviates from the common understandings of it, which tend to construct the field as predominantly masculine. Other forms of enacting it can then be deemed as “inaccurately” representing the entrepreneurial domain. This study’s female entrepreneurs have provided insights on how the conception and performance of entrepreneurship, within their Saudi context, can be indeed malleable and susceptible to alterations in comparison to the conceptualisations found throughout the entrepreneurship literature. The participants are, arguably, disrupting elements of the field by paving the way for their personal and professional experiences to construct their entrepreneurial “realities” and by adopting tenets or values, many of which are essentialist, to be the foundation of their everyday entrepreneurial experiences. These values, acquired from socio-cultural discourses, forge understandings of gender-appropriate roles, which consequently have implications upon the types of entrepreneurial careers and fields in which the women are embedded. Another explicit way, as will be addressed below, of reconstructing entrepreneurship, is the ways through which the women conceive of the field *per se*. For example, the entanglement of motherhood experiences with entrepreneurship is one novel way to construct the field as specific to their circumstances. Women are also observed to introduce “feminine”, or what are discursively deemed as feminine, attributes to the field that would normally be condemned in a traditional business arena. More specifically, they are seen to display both “masculine” traits, which are conventionally ascribed to an entrepreneur, and “feminine” ones that are normally detached from a successful entrepreneur, which underscores the typified discourses of the eccentric heroic male entrepreneur. The above delineation is a glimpse into the ways in which entrepreneurship is being sculpted to match the women’s experiences, and discourses by which the field can be said to become feminised. The following themes are derived from the commonalities between the women’s responses and the emphasis they ascribe to these responses. I also identified patterns in how they view themselves and their roles in society and mapping them back to the types of careers the women occupy.



## 8.2. Data Findings and Analysis

### The Feminisation of Entrepreneurship

#### *Self-Essentialising*

It is pivotal to elucidate the process through which entrepreneurship has become feminised by the women and their career choices, as deduced from the interview transcripts. It begins with the women's held tenets with regards to innate, yet somewhat socially constructed, gendered roles and how these are manifest in their traits, such as being passionate, emotional and people-oriented, which I identified through their narratives. That is, most of the participants believed that they have inherent responsibilities as women towards their families and society as a whole: "as a woman, you are responsible for the society. If you don't choose how your pregnancy goes, or how your delivery goes, and you take the easy route and do the caesarean, and you don't breastfeed your babies and you give them formula, you will have an artificial, fake society, because that's how people are brought into the world" (I.7). Some women believed, to further elaborate, that they are "built" this way. Seemingly, there is an implication their biological functions justify these socialised gender roles such as women simultaneously being the caregivers, the mothers, the wives and having a multiplicity of responsibilities: "it fascinates me how women juggle so much and are able to hold space for so many things at the same time. I think it just comes with our monthly menstrual cycle, our biology" (I.12). Another participant supplements: "there is definitely an innate role of a woman to be a mother and a caretaker" (I.1).

This suggests given their motherly and caregiving responsibilities, that they are innately ascribed to the domestic sphere where they take care of the house, the children and the husband, which are suggested to be the foundation of society; as if taking care of the well-being of society is their *raison d'être*. What seems to be at work here is women biologically essentialising themselves. That is, categorising women as entailing common features (Sayer, 1997) and "natural" characteristics, such as inherently ascribing them with multiple and simultaneous responsibilities, which endow them with a "true" underlying essence dictated by biology rather than cultural and historical circumstances (Gelman, 2005). This conception of a "true" nature is regarded to provide women with their sense of identities (who they are) and can be accountable for the similarities that they share with regards to how they enact their

responsibilities (what they do). This resonates with Meyer and Gelman's (2016) notions of *gender essentialism*, which argues that essentialising is not merely on biological "species", but also social groups, such as women. This in turn promotes descriptive (who they should be) and prescriptive (what they should do) stereotyping, that is, in this study's context, the women are inherently expected to be caregivers and mothers and should be responsible for a multitude of things including the wellbeing of society. The workings of essentialist stereotyping, dictating women's identities and conducts, reinforce and perpetuate gendered ideologies that these women hold and are; consequently, reifying the women's entrepreneurial identities, choices and performances, as will be highlighted below.

These women are disrupting entrepreneurship in ways that can alter the conception of the field and more significantly improve women's economic position in Saudi Arabia. Yet, conceptions of femininity and womanhood remain perpetuated and enacted within the realms of the newly conceived female entrepreneurship, or the field of entrepreneurship in general. And although entrepreneurship is being conceived and enacted in ways that are unconventional and different from traditional notions of it, the women seem to be engaged in the repetitive work of motherhood and caregiving, which can reinforce tacit forms of marginalisation and discrimination that are not explicitly perceived as such by the women, for these daily practices seem applicable to their inherent "womanly" traits. What seems to be at work is a paradoxical state of affairs that shape these women's everydayness: while they engage in conventional and predicated gendered roles, they perform entrepreneurship that is meant to be reserved for males and that is not meant to be either trivial nor repetitive. However, this triviality of the conceptualisation and performance of womanhood is tied, by these women's daily practices, to the new conceptions of entrepreneurship. Although entrepreneurship is being enacted divergently from endemic conceptualisations, it is being reduced to the mundaneness of everyday life by being a conduit that aids women in organising their multiple domestic, social and professional obligations. In the way in which entrepreneurship was revealed to be a malleable concept (by the ways in which women perceive and enact it), womanhood and the triviality of everydayness can also be a re-constructed and flexible concept should the ideological constraints around it loosen. Therefore, there seems to exist a tension between these women's personal and social realities that encapsulate essentialist notions of gender and forging new forms of

identities within entrepreneurial ventures. In other words, womanhood is enacted conventionally, and manifests in both women's entrepreneurial careers and the ways in which they enmesh the personal with the professional to perform their domestic duties. In turn, entrepreneurship can be simultaneously conceived as both novel and mundane due to its detachment from ubiquitous understandings of entrepreneurship and enmeshment with the conventionality of women's everyday lives.

It would be fair to assume that the status and conception of womanhood appear to exist prior to theirs. These women also depicted themselves as entailing divergent spheres of reality (being a mother, wife, caregiver, professional and so on) and their consciousness can be suggested, rather than shifted from one sphere to another, to amalgamate the different spheres that they experience in their daily life-worlds. By analysing the women's answers, I have uncovered other spheres that are obscured by socio-cultural constraints or expectations, such as: dissident identities to gendered careers, re-constructing women's socio-cultural and economic positions in KSA, the re-construction of Saudi national identity, and the aspiration of a higher purpose enabled by their experiences, and more specifically, their engagement in the economic realm.

### ***From Self-Essentialising to Gender Stereotyping***

Some of the women's essentialist tenets appear to stem from numerous discourses such as the conceptions of the family and womanhood derived from the conventional house-hold settings, where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is the caregiver: "I can see examples around me of the typical stereotype, of the mother is the caregiver and the father is the breadwinner and that's it" (I.8). Educational discourses also play a vital role in shaping these ideologies. For instance, there is an Arabic poem prevalent in Arabic elementary schools, that metaphorically renders a mother as a school, which forms the foundation of a "good" society.<sup>61</sup> The influence of the above-mentioned Arabic poem was evident in a few of the participants as one mentioned:

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<sup>61</sup> This resonates with early discourses on Western women's positions in the pre and post-industrial era in which women were responsible for carrying civilisation to the frontier through conserving family, social, and religious values (Underwood, 1985). They were dictated to be transmitters of cultural values as they were the bearers of a civilized society.

“the mother is a school. This is basic. We are responsible [for society]” (I.7). Another participant stated: “motherhood was also the university that ... kept me motivated” (I.6). The former implies that mothers are institutions that forge knowledge and transmit it to their children that can impact the ways in which these children grow, and how they form society. Motherhood is likewise a discourse through which society adopts modes of thinking and behaving, and such “discourse” should be valued to flourish its favourable impact upon society. The latter infers that the woman’s learning experiences are derived from being a mother; that is, being a mother enables her to learn and experience life in ways that are influenced by such bodily experiences. In other words, motherhood is inferred to be the building block with which to form an understanding of one’s everyday life - a vital form of discourse that can forge understandings and shape values impacting how individuals behave in life’s circumstances, for instance, in pursuing entrepreneurial careers. That is, the teachings of a mother can have, although not direct, consequences upon how one performs entrepreneurship based on acquired human values. Moreover, women can learn through their motherly experiences ways to construct and thus perform, for example, their entrepreneurial identities and endeavours. Drawing upon Foucault’s (1972 p.49 cited in Mills, 1997 p.17) discourse, the practice or performance of motherhood can forge the “reality” and knowledge of some of the women’s entrepreneurial experiences, as motherhood per se is both institutional and institutionalised as to forge and enact social conduct and shape new practices into play. Constructing motherhood as a discourse endows them with the power, as also instilled within Saudi culture, to create meaning, morality and thought through the teachings and discourse of motherhood, and consequently, impose a sense of individuality by guiding women in their personal and professional endeavours. The enmeshment of motherhood and entrepreneurship will be further discussed below in the ways in which certain women conceive entrepreneurship as a field.

Further, these early educational discourses, in Saudi Arabia, are imbued with representations of gendered discrepancies. One of the female participants had a recollection of these gender stereotyping in schoolbooks that illustrated boys playing outside and girls cooking and cleaning. The participant questioned these types of representations and the psychological essentialism imbued in such depictions. Such

recollections can imply the existence of power relations that encapsulate such discourses through institutionalising subjects such as these women, at early ages. Since power is inextricably linked to knowledge (Foucault, 1988), educational institutions have the power to sculpt gender-appropriate practices of both genders, which consequently, can transform women into subjects through “subjectivating” them into certain roles, which can also impact their own sense of self. In other words, women can be made subjects through various institutional (e.g. governmental, familial, patriarchal) techniques and mechanisms that constitute the exercise of power and “subjectivation” practices that stem from the cultures in which the women are produced. Foucault (1994) further delineates the modes of objectification that transform individuals into subjects; one of which is the modes of inquiry that try to give themselves the status of science, which can be manifest in these educational discourses that assert the existing biological differences between both genders are true. These are then often taken for granted and as justification for diverging gender roles or even inequalities at institutional levels. Another mode of objectifying is through the ways in which humans transform themselves into subjects (e.g. how women have learned to recognise themselves as subjects of reproduction and caregiving). This power, which transforms women into subjects, is the power that forces itself to their immediate everyday life practices; hence, teaching them for instance, gender roles, their own identity and responsibilities and thus, imposing a law of truth on them (Foucault, 1994 p.331).

Gendered ideologies are also derived from personal experiences through which women observe their infant children who, from an early age, act very differently, and such discrepancies were attributed to the inherent sexual divergences: “maybe because I’m watching my kids grow up, and I’m a new mom too...and I notice a difference between my twins. One’s a girl, and one’s a boy, and there’s a big difference... I think it just solidifies my opinion about how men and women are different” (I.15). This belief is counter to my approach that gender is performative rather than innate. Therefore, the ways in which some of the female participants perceive sexual differences as intrinsic and socially inevitable rests upon a “naturalised social construction” (Bourdieu, 1998 cited in Biemmi, 2015 p.130) that is instilled from infancy and in turn projected upon their children. Socialisation in everyday professional and social experiences also reinforce gender role disparities that are thus

deemed natural: “by nature, women like to get to know each other and talk over coffee, and I’ve noticed by doing business with women I have to say, “How about we go get a cup of coffee and we talk about this issue?” ...but with a man it’s, “Give me your email address, and I’ll send you the pertaining information that you need” (I.15). Another participant confirms: “innately, women are more collaborative. We care more... We’re open to sharing ideas and working with each other, whereas with men, they’re more individualised” (I.1). Although it seems that the majority of women hold essentialist perceptions about gender roles “I think there has to be some sort of innateness in how the genders are different” (I.15), socialisation processes are also recognised in terms of their influence upon the roles enacted by different social groups, namely men and women: “maybe socialisation also plays an additional role in it. Definitely our society plays a different role in it...when I watch my daughter and her friends play, the boys are so different than the girls.”<sup>62</sup> Their internal beliefs are thus reinforced by how other women enact their genders, which seems to be similar, and thus a cyclical process of gender ideologies and enactment of one’s “femininity” is forged. In addition to “agents of socialisations” in their impact upon the women’s gendered roles, some women acknowledged the role institutions play in forging these gendered behaviours: “I think it’s Saudi society and Islamic society both affect how we act and how we behave and how we think. It’s just the nurturing of our upbringing and it’s unavoidable” (I.8).

The participant’s discussions around the family structure, gender differences and the impact of institutions upon their modes of thinking and behaving resonate with the term *cultural essentialism* put forward by DeLamater and Hyde (1998) who posit that the respective type of essentialism infers that both men and women differ due to early socialisation processes and thus women are not equal to men in patriarchal terms. As such, men are socialised to become autonomous and women relational, and these are reinforced through cultural experiences. The cultural meanings embedded within both gender’s social experiences are permeated in institutional discourses, such as educational ones as highlighted above, and in turn, have vital implications upon

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<sup>62</sup> Gender socialisation was deemed as the process through which people learn and reinforce to “do” [or enact] gender by internalising gender norms while they interact with agents of socialisation such as the family, friends, social institutions and so on (Balvin, 2017). The latter definition infers two influencing elements: the internalisation process; that is how women perceive these gender roles, and society, which both impacts how these women enact their “feminine” identities.

women's, and female entrepreneurs', identity construction. Due to these socialisation processes in Saudi Arabia, through which one can gain an understanding about their social positionality, Saudi female entrepreneurs may not have the agency to construct their own entrepreneurial identities and experiences. In that, the already dictated cultural ascriptions to their gender determine the type of entrepreneurial identity they perform. It can be, however, unpacked in the following ways: women are indeed encapsulating the cultural meanings associated with femininity through the ways in which they prioritise the domestic realm, the family and their caregiving roles in general, which reinforce their essentialist ideas. They, paradoxically, are breaking these obsolete cultural associations about femininity through engaging in entrepreneurial activity in the public sphere, not to mention the ways in which they conceive of and perform entrepreneurship that seem in many instances distant from typical Western understandings of the field. That is, they amalgamate conformist and non-conformist attributes with respect to cultural ascriptions regarding womanhood and endemic conceptions of entrepreneurship.

### *From Gender Stereotyping to Career Feminising*

Through this study's empirical evidence, it was observed, as will be discussed below, that the interviewed women tend to gravitate towards certain fields due in part to engrained Saudi cultural values. That is, women's career choices are attributed to the workings of cultural essentialism, in that early socialisation processes, such as instilling different gender roles within Saudi men and women, have implications upon which sectors both genders occupy.<sup>63</sup> To better elaborate, the gendered ideologies that some of the women entrepreneurs hold are manifest in the types of careers in which they are involved; thus, these tenets and their enactment construct a type of entrepreneurship that is ascribed to women; a female-oriented entrepreneurship, or indeed a feminised entrepreneurship. The women dominate sectors that are historically deemed feminine, such as the health and service arena: "I'm the founder of [company name] Women's Awareness Centre, and also the co-founder of [company name] Boutique" (I.7). Another states: "basically, the mission of [company name], it is a

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<sup>63</sup> *Cultural essentialism* has a role in, and the persistence of, occupational segregation (Joyce and Walker, 2015), which is the inclination for men and women to engage in different occupations or industries (Hakim, 2004 p.145 cited in Joyce and Walker, 2015 p.43).

consulting firm that helps [luxury] brands come into the market” (I.1), and another: “[Company name] is a multidisciplinary platform for creatives” (I.6). The women, more specifically, gravitate towards people-oriented careers, which fulfil both their aspirations and their ascribed gender roles: “I also love working with people. So, working in the PR industry was great for me because it means that I’m working with people all the time” (I.9). Another participant supplements: “I believe in sharing knowledge and I love helping people” (I.10). And: “the whole concept for that was that it’s women supporting women. One of the things that I’m trying to do in Saudi is trying to basically create a community where we can all push each other together and elevate each other” (I.1). It was not; however, established whether their embeddedness in these domains is a matter of personal choice impacted by their gender-role ideologies or a matter of career inequality and limited opportunities constraining their choices. Women’s “choices” are usually forged by the factors in their social contexts in which they are embedded (Kossek et al., 2016), which, arguably, suggest the socially constructed “nature” of the women’s career choices and hence the construction of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia as impacted by socio-cultural expectations and restrains. Career equality in an entrepreneurial realm in KSA would encompass the degree to which women, relative to men, have equal access to career opportunities, finances, networking, trainings and so on. It would also entail, as Martins et al. (2002) argue, equal portrayal of both men and women in leadership positions across hierarchal levels.

Businesswomen, female entrepreneurs and women in high managerial positions in Saudi Arabia are witnessing an increased level of media portrayal, but this does not in itself suggest the existence of a level playing field for both men and women in the country’s economic realm. It also does not shed the light on culturally produced career inequality by providing women with less opportunities, networks, decision-making and access to power in comparison to men (Catalyst, 2015). The women’s career “choices” can also be attributed to a gender bias perspective (Eagly and Karau, 2002) that dictate certain occupations for these women and impose social expectations to fulfil these roles.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Gender tenets can impact career aspirations and vocational choices. Gender-related stereotypes have implications upon the preferences towards professional careers deemed more apt to either the male or female gender (Ramaci et al., 2017).



### ***From Career Feminising to Entrepreneurship Reconceptualising***

The feminisation aspect is introduced to entrepreneurship through the ways in which the sampled women conceive of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur. Although not all have similar conceptualisations, but they collectively add to the reservoir of meaning of the field. They have re-constructed the conceptualisation of entrepreneurship/the entrepreneur first through their gendered tenets, career choices, attributes and their conception of the field per se. Most of the women hold conventional notions of entrepreneurship that is of being a risky and an uncertain venture, seizing opportunities and closing gaps in the market, struggle, creativity and novelty, disruption and so on: “the way that I would define an entrepreneur is that, basically, it’s a person that is a corporate gambler. We are about taking risks and I think the more risks, the more return” (I.1). Another participant explains: “an entrepreneur is someone who sees a need, whether that need is in the society, and creates something just to satisfy that need, or there is a need within that person to create something to sell to the society or to the community to satisfy a need within them” (I.7). These definitions resonate with the conventional ways in which the entrepreneurship literature has defined entrepreneurship/entrepreneur, as seen in Chapter 3, by Kuratko and Hodgetts (1992).

### ***Reconceptualising through Displayed Traits***

The interviewed female entrepreneurs spoke of their willingness to take risks to attain their aspirations and a few were keen to convey their failures which they framed as learning experiences: “as a business owner, actually, I was an entrepreneur, but if you put the definition of sustainability, if you put financial profit, if you put all of this, I failed” (I.10). Although the intention is not to compare male and female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, it is significant to reveal and contribute to the extant literature on entrepreneurship that even women in non-Western contexts do embody the conventionally masculine traits within the entrepreneurial realm such as self-confidence, autonomy, risk-taking and so on while also displaying what are deemed feminine traits such as expressiveness, supportiveness and connectedness. This offers further rationale to revisit the innate conceptualisations of *the entrepreneur* that tend to valorise the male figure.

Saudi female entrepreneurs are relatively new to the entrepreneurial context in comparison to men, and one of the renowned participants suggested that many female entrepreneurs are closing their businesses: “a lot of female entrepreneurs I know left entrepreneurship because they were not able to do it” (I.11), but the reason for the latter is still not clear.<sup>65</sup> Also, older generations seem to have acquired work and leadership skills through experiences while newer generations, in addition to everyday experiences, engage in workshops and social media to understand the market and acquire the necessary skills to lead their businesses. Education is also “catching up” by incorporating sessions or courses on entrepreneurship for female students. It can be suggested that Saudi women are being more entrepreneurial and innovative than their male counterparts in terms of navigating the incurred barriers, combining a multitude of traits (which are deemed as both masculine and feminine) and creating strategies that enable them to navigate their contexts and perform the multiplicity of domestic and professional duties that they simultaneously have. The women are therefore being creative in ways that enable them to manage their daily professional and personal obligations.

Gender-role classifications are highly evident among the interviewed female entrepreneurs. The women, although they acknowledge socially constructed gender-roles, do not perceive them as stereotypes, but as mostly associated to one’s sex or biological traits. Drawing upon the Gender-Role Orientation (Bem, 1981), this study’s participants seem to correlate or identify certain personal traits, values and behaviours with socially constructed notions of gender that they generally perceive as innate: that is, essentialising their social gender roles. None of the participants; however, ascribed gender-role stereotypes to the entrepreneur; they did not associate any gender to the field as highlighted above. They merely referred to discrepancies between both men and women with regards to attitudes and leadership styles. The female entrepreneurs’ held tenets with regards to gender roles do not seem to affect the ways in which they

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<sup>65</sup> Kalleberg and Leicht (1991) aver that *work experience* and *innovative behaviours* seem to be plausible explanations for any gendered-based differences existing in business, in particular for the business’s success and survival (Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991). First, women arguably have less work and managerial experience than their male counterparts. Second, women are thought to be less likely to be innovative as men or adopt innovative strategies in their businesses, which in return is another determinant of the failure of their businesses (Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991).

perceive entrepreneurship, as it was not explicitly stated but it can have tacit implications on how they choose their careers. Since there was no mention, by the women, of gender-role stereotypes in entrepreneurship, there is no inference as to whether they aim to embody “masculine-traits” conventionally associated with the *entrepreneur*. They do, nonetheless, seem to embody both the masculine and feminine traits mentioned in literature despite that female entrepreneurship is perceived in opposition to the masculine entrepreneurial characteristics.<sup>66</sup> Some of the women grew-up in a family business environment, which can explicate these “masculine” traits as innate: “I think I’ve always had that in me, and I think if you talk to any entrepreneur you have that already innately as a child” (I.1). These women seem to even balance, among other things, gender-related traits, which also renders the experience of entrepreneurship specific for their “feminine” realities.

### ***Reconceptualising as Motherhood, and vice versa***

Some women conceived entrepreneurship as interchangeable with *motherhood*. The ways in which a mother takes care of a child and endeavours to create a good life for him/her is similar to the ways through which one starts a business and struggles with all the uncertainties to establish and prosper a business venture, as described by one of the participants. Not only explicitly by perceiving entrepreneurship and motherhood as interchangeable, but also, the ways in which they enmesh their motherly roles with entrepreneurial ones suggest the interplay of both realms: “they’re the same...I had a routine. The kids are in school from 8:00 to 3:00. They’re more independent. They can go out of school, go to my moms, eat, do their homework, I can travel for the day and they won’t be as clingy, no separation anxiety, no demands of the babies and the toddlers” (I.12). Another participant adds: “you can be a mom and a wife and be a working woman” (I.1). It can be thus apparent that some of the women speak of being simultaneously a mother and an entrepreneur as naturally enmeshed and their daily routines are reflective of that amalgamation. Resonating with Joona’s (2018) argument

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<sup>66</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that there is not enough interview data to establish whether these women perceive entrepreneurship to be a masculine career and whether they adapt their behaviours or enact stereotypical masculine traits to navigate the entrepreneurial realm in Saudi Arabia that is saturated by men.

that “mamatreneurs”<sup>67</sup>, mothers in the entrepreneurial realm, can be more efficient at work and are able to identify market opportunities pertaining to motherhood or children, is one of this study’s participants experience: “now that I understand that, especially because I’m going through it, now I’m looking at baby brands. Now we’re bringing thetot.com to Saudi...I’m doing more kids’ events” (I.1).

### ***Motherhood and Sacrifice***

Sacrifice is another pivotal factor for the feminisation of entrepreneurship. This sacrifice can mostly be attributed to women as they tend to engage (more than men) in the domestic responsibilities.<sup>68</sup> The women find themselves adapting to their dual responsibilities by creating strategies to perform their roles. They prioritise: “my priority at a certain time were my children, while also building my career” (I.11) and organise their time to adhere to the needs of both their families, more specifically children, and their careers. They consequently find themselves on the one hand sacrificing time from work: “when I had only one [child], it was much easier to divide my time and my focus. Back then, I guess the growth of the business at the time when she was young was still manageable. Then she ended up in day-care, and then I had more time for the business, so it worked out. But when the twins came, of course they needed a lot more attention, so it took away from the business...now I have the demand of two babies, I think it impacted the natural growth of the business” (I.15). They also sacrifice time with their children, and indeed themselves: “I only have eight hours to do everything in my life including personal grooming and eating and kids. If you take that out, and then you take the personal time with the kids, that means you only have two hours or three hours of free time” (I.11). This amalgamation of the personal/domestic and the professional realms renders entrepreneurship as intertwined with the everyday personal circumstances: “the private does affect the public” (I.11). That is, their entrepreneurial ventures are influenced by what is occurring in the domestic sphere, and in some instances the domestic becomes the entrepreneurial and

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<sup>67</sup> “Mumpreneurs” deliberately construct their businesses around their families (Ekinsmyth, 2014 cited in Foley, et al., 2018) as they are highly impacted by the ideology of *intense mothering* (Foley, et al., 2018).

<sup>68</sup> Sacrifices made by mothers are either a personal sense of responsibility to honour familial obligations or social expectations of constant altruistic and selfless care that is “naturally” ascribed to motherhood roles (Horne and Breitzkreuz, 2018).

vice versa by bringing work to home or taking home to work: “work was home and home was work” (I.9). Entrepreneurship in this regard can be deemed domesticated, which contributes to the feminisation of entrepreneurship as this can be mostly ascribed to the women’s circumstances in KSA.

### ***Reconceptualising as a Growth and Learning Journey***

Entrepreneurship was also rendered, as stated and inferred by some of the women, as a learning and growth journey. It is the hard work, struggle and uncertainties that one has to go through to be deemed an entrepreneur: “entrepreneurship is a life changing experience. I was able to look at entrepreneurship from different perspectives, but one thing I know is that if you don’t go through the journey, I’m sorry, you can’t call yourself an entrepreneur” (I.6). Failing and learning from mistakes contribute to their personal and professional growth, and the women did not seem to be reluctant to share some difficult experiences: “I had no management skills and I made those errors, don’t get me wrong. But you know, you do, you have to learn from your mistakes” (I.1). It can be inferred that this learning and growth element of entrepreneurship, which is vital to some of the women, establishes or constructs a notion of a triumphant entrepreneur, who became successful while defeating all the odds: “yeah, we have struggles, but we’re managing them. We’re doing it in the face of all of those odds” (I.15). A conceptualisation that also constructs entrepreneurship as an acquired skill that one can master: “I have to learn and educate myself. This is me. Okay? I’m not a business graduate who had this job. No, I had to learn” (I.10) even if a few deemed it as an innate skill: “I think I’ve always had that in me, and I think if you talk to any entrepreneur you have that already innately as a child” (I.1). Entrepreneurship is consequently a “journey” encompassing a classical narrative with the lead character (the women) incurring obstacles and adversaries (antagonists or confrontations) “I tried subcontracting a lot of stuff in my business in the beginning to consultants, to people, so that I would be able to balance, and that was a mistake” (I.11) and a happy ending to the story (resolution or success): “all I can do is impact by being who I am... So once I learned that, the parameters or the concepts, it just liberated me to show up as my authentic me” (I.12), “I just embraced the negative side of this market, which is the high turnover, and I made it part of why my company would be successful” (I.6).

The feminisation of entrepreneurship is; therefore, due to first, the ways in which women's personal held tenets impact their career choices and the fields in which they are embedded; second, the ways through which they display personal and professional characteristics, that can be conventionally ascribed to women, at work. Third, through the novel ways through which they conceive of entrepreneurship as being specific to their everyday experiences or indeed their everyday realities; and fourth, through the ways through which they amalgamate domestic responsibilities with entrepreneurial ones. These everyday personal, social and business experiences have implications upon how the women conceive, not only themselves, but also entrepreneurship and the ways they enact it. That is, women are adopting their essentialist- "feminine" specific- conceptions and values and are enacting them within an entrepreneurial realm. They are also findings ways through which they can navigate and perform their dual responsibilities (domestic and career), which seem specific to women, and hence the feminisation of entrepreneurship.

### ***Feminising through Emotionalising: Entrepreneurship as Emotional Domain***

Contributing to the feminisation of entrepreneurship, is the emotional element brought to it. The first layer is the ways that women describe themselves and their careers; they tend to use emotions such as *love* and *passion* to explain the underlying force that fuels their enthusiasm and devotion towards their businesses. They spoke of how they love their careers and certain aspects of their daily jobs: "I've been passionate about education and human development since, I think, early years" (I.12), "That's what I love about my work" (I.2), "Communications is my passion" (I.9). That is, they tend to incorporate emotions when describing their entrepreneurial "journeys". Their narratives also reveal emotional (and physical) implications of being an entrepreneur on their personal and professional lives: "I got psychologically tired" (I.7) and especially with regards to simultaneously being a mother and an entrepreneur: "It's this constant struggle of who comes first" (I.15), "I sometimes go to work in the morning, I wake up and I'm like tired and I'm like oh god, no" (I.17). Another dimension of the emotionalising of entrepreneurship stems from the notion that being a woman per se brings an emotional element to the field. As opposed to their male counterparts, the women usually lead with emotions when making decisions or

creating relationships with clients or consumers: “I think being emotional is beautiful, it’s not a weakness. I think it’s brilliant, but how you portray those emotions and how then it’s affecting work or affecting your lifestyle and so forth. I’m sure men are emotional. I’ve seen men who were very emotional and sometimes make decisions based on an emotional whim” (I.9), “I like the fact that I can look at something emotionally more than a man because I think our money now is attached to emotions” (I.1). Being emotional not only is a personal expression but can also be a business strategy that enhances the business dynamics: “we can be quite emotional when it’s all women, but generally I feel like we do empower each other, we do push each other in a very good way” (I.17).

Women further contribute in constructing entrepreneurship as an emotional domain through the ways they depict themselves as entrepreneurs. Narratives that are imbued with confidence and pride render these women as self-aware and as having agency over their personal and public realms: “I think now, this is something that I am proud of and I have the ability to go in all directions and dare to know what this group needs. Dare to assume what this space needs” (I.12). Some of the women, in specific, shared their frustrations with certain gendered barriers within Saudi Arabia, nevertheless, their awareness of their capabilities, or lack thereof, confidence and resilience enabled them to cope up with experienced hinderances. That is, this confidence is manifest in two folds: first, through the ways they believe in themselves and their capabilities: “it just anchored me in a way that actually could induce my creativity, my analytical thought, my pride, my dignity, my faith” (I.6) and second, through the ways they navigated the identified barriers: “the obstacle is only there if we make it an obstacle, but if we learn how to balance, it will be fine” (I.10). Emotionalising entrepreneurship through portraying a strong sense of self was also evident by acknowledging the role that values play in their daily lives and especially through the ways they manifest in their businesses: “practically apply them [values] by being there every day by pushing people, the team, having the team work together, trying to motivate and encourage on a daily basis” (I.17). The most common values identified revolve around: integrity, authenticity, fairness, giving, hard-work and resilience. Other values include: respect, religious values, professionalism and so on: “I believe in true hard work, really hard work is very important it pays back. Being always fair and having integrity, sticking to the values” (I.17), “If I could combine the three businesses that I did, the common

thread, the one thing that I can find common in the three is female resilience” (I.7), “For me, it’s about being environmentally very conscious. You’re supposed to be somebody who makes decisions. I’m making sure that I’m treating my employees really well, as best as I can” (I.11). That is, moral values are mostly involved in their businesses, which highlight the virtue of their personal and professional characters. Feeling good about one’s business through the values they implement contributes in constructing the emotional element of entrepreneurship.

From these values, tendencies and “actualities” of being embedded in people-oriented businesses, women are seen as collaborative and supportive, which resonates with the gendered expectations that render them as responsible for society as a whole. More specifically, some of the women described their interests in supporting other women. That is, to empower other women to attain their objectives and realise their aspirations: “we’re doing training programs for women to learn how to support each other, like community support” (I.7), “A big niche in my clientele practice is women development. It fascinates me how women juggle so much and are able to hold space for so many things at the same time” (I.12). “I established several departments for women over there, starting off with a training centre, where we focused on building the capacity of women for entry level job placement” (I.10). “The whole concept for that was that it’s women supporting women...to basically create a community where we can all push each other together and elevate each other” (I.1). This support is not only a practical one that merely focuses upon capacity building and development, but also a moral, emotional and psychological one that can encourage women to pursue their aspirations in divergent realms especially in a context that was traditionally reserved for their male counterparts. Emotionalising entrepreneurship is consequently achieved through: the ways in which the women entrepreneurs convey excitement and pride when sharing their business experiences, the prevalent use of “love” and “passion” when describing their businesses, and through conceptions of womanhood tied to emotions that reconstruct entrepreneurship as different from “male” entrepreneurship. Further, the deployment of moral values in their daily business endeavours brings an emotional element to the field through righteousness. Providing emotional support, in addition to other types, to women in Saudi Arabia further adds an emotional element to female entrepreneurship in KSA.



### **8.3. A Move Away from Gendering Entrepreneurship**

This chapter is not an invitation to perpetuate the gendering of the field of entrepreneurship as operating in a dialectic opposition when enacted by either men or women. Echoing Marlow and Martinez Dy (2017) delineated in Chapter 1, there should be a move away from using gendered ascriptions such as “female” or “male” (which is rarely used as it is deemed the norm) entrepreneurship. Even though the current study deploys one, it is to highlight that there are differences brought by women that are not yet widely recognised as immanently associated with the field as when men’s experiences are of concern. The issue then becomes the power and economic value ascribed to the differences that both men and women experience through socialisation processes, and especially within a highly conventional context with engrained essentialist gendered roles such as KSA. If the Saudi female participants identify as entrepreneurs, who are also succeeding in their businesses, while also holding biologically essentialist beliefs, then there must be a recognition of the types of traits that the women display when reconsidering the orthodox entrepreneur archetype. Therefore, through this chapter, I seek to expand the ways through which entrepreneurship is theorised through exploring practice in which it surpasses the ubiquitous masculinised version of the field, with its very confined set of entrepreneurial aptitudes. Furthermore, creativity is an inevitable constituent of entrepreneurship; as such, they should not be within defined boundaries. We can then consider women’s unique experiences in redefining the field as also entailing traits such as care, compassion, collectiveness, passion and solidarity, regardless of whether these traits are innate to women or not. These traits are mentioned as examples as they appear in the evidence of the study and are not intended to confine women. Also, the ascription of entrepreneurship as being a “public” domain away from the domestic sphere should also be surpassed, especially that, given the current global health circumstances, businesses are operating from homes, and surely their embeddedness in the domestic setting alters the ways business is conducted. Then the de-valuing of the domestic sphere when considering entrepreneurial ventures should be revisited.

#### **8.4. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the empirical findings derived from the interview data highlighting the ways the Saudi women's entrepreneurial experiences either perpetuated or deviated from ubiquitous understandings and performances of Western entrepreneurship. Although this study views gender as performative and opposes an essentialist view, the chapter revealed how gender is constructed through the female entrepreneurs' experiences, not only influencing their business endeavours, but their self-perceptions of womanhood and their positions within society. The obtained insights reveal novel ways through which entrepreneurship is perceived and performed, and more specifically in how women amalgamate what are deemed masculine and feminine traits to enable them to perform their entrepreneurship in ways that reflect their everyday realities. The next chapter continues the discussion obtained from the interview data but looks more closely into the types of barriers the women face and the strategies utilised to navigate these.

## **Chapter 9: Interview Findings and Analysis – Part Two**

### **9.1. Data Findings and Analysis**

#### **Barriers to and Strategies for Female Entrepreneurship in KSA**

The current chapter unveils the types of barriers expressed by the female participants and the types of strategies they adopt to navigate both their entrepreneurial and personal contexts, which appear to overlap as the strategies employed are indicative of this enmeshment. The following are the identified types of barriers that the female entrepreneurs face.

#### **Barriers**

##### ***Personal Barriers***

From analysing the interview transcripts, life choices such as getting married, having children and pursuing education form personal barriers to female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. Motherhood, or the decision to become a mother, was the most prevalent theme amongst the women, therefore, I afforded more attention to it. In fact, 10 out of the 19 interviewed female participants referred to their motherhood experiences and its implications upon their entrepreneurial careers. Brush et al. (2009) adopted the conception of motherhood as a metaphor for the family context and the role a woman plays within it and the ways in which it impacts her entrepreneurial endeavours. Brush et al. (2009) suggested two consequences of motherhood on entrepreneurship: first, the domestic roles undermine women's, who are also mothers, capabilities to become entrepreneurs due to the need to allocate time to both the domestic and public responsibilities. Second; motherhood encapsulates the women entrepreneurs' persona (Brush et al., 2009). This infers that their social reality can be influenced by their conceptions of motherhood and these can constrain the possibility for a multiplicity of enmeshed "realities" or identities that can impact their entrepreneurial ventures. The internalisation of motherhood can be suggested to indeed encapsulate the women's personas, and to some women, it can also encapsulate their professional identities: "they're the same" stated one participant (I.12) when explaining the enmeshment of

personal and professional roles. Another participant used the term “working mom” to allude to the simultaneous personas and roles one can occupy. Nevertheless, this does not mean that their conceptions of motherhood do not allow for a multiplicity of enmeshed realities as suggested by Brush et al. (2009); that is, they can and do merge their roles or identities as both mothers and entrepreneurs.

It was revealed that these identities exist interchangeably, especially when the children are very young. Indeed, such amalgamation impacts their entrepreneurial ventures and responsibilities, but only in terms of time allocation and setting priorities: “I will tell you my priorities definitely have shifted, whereas before I was definitely, I think I ... This is why I say wait to get married” (I.1). The participant supplements: “I think it affects ... I always tell the girls in my team, do everything now. Do it while you don’t have these other responsibilities...I was able to be on-call 24 hours. If there was someone that called into a client and said, “I need you in Dubai, I would get on the plane the next morning, whereas now, that doesn’t happen” (I.1). Another interviewee states: “as a mother and as a wife...it always puts you in a place of a responsibility of making sure things get done...there is always a challenge of balancing between what is important in your personal life as a mom, as a wife, how important things are at work” (I.17). It is thus, time and the multiple responsibilities they hold are of concern, and not the ways in which they internalise motherhood or their performance of it. Then, there does not seem to exist gendered constraints on their self-agencies due to their conceptualisations and performativity of motherhood, but it can be suggested that there are gendered constraints in terms of enabling women to fully devote time and focus on their careers due to their domestic responsibilities. Some of these gendered constraints are manifest in the women’s businesses, more specifically, it does impact their ventures negatively: “before [daughter’s name], I had my business, my clients, my traveling, so when she came everything got messed” (I.12). Another participant explains: “motherhood has responsibilities that I felt that needed to be addressed, that I could not subcontract to somebody else. I tried subcontracting a lot of stuff in my business in the beginning to consultants, to people, so that I would be able to balance, and that was a mistake” (I.11). Other interviewees share the negative implications of being a mother upon their businesses: “when the twins came, of course they needed a lot more attention, so it took away from the business” (I.15), “I find that I’m struggling in my

businesses, because I constantly connect the woman as a mother and the health and the success of a society is with the help and success of a mom in the home, even if she's a professional" (I.7). Although some women mentioned the mental and physical struggles of being a mother, and emphasised time allocation as the main concern, it is nonetheless not certain (except from the above) whether such concerns negatively affected their businesses.

It is then vital to extrapolate from their accounts of motherhood the ways in which femininity and womanhood are tacitly conveyed by analysing what is missing from their narratives. None of the women explicitly deemed their "innate" womanly roles as mothers and caregivers as problematic per se. Neither did they question them as tied to one gender over another. Obscuring, advertently or inadvertently, the difficulties of womanhood can infer that these women are socialised to accept, and not complain about, these "natural" dispositions. The women rather seem to focus on ways through which they can sculpt everyday personal and business experiences to navigate their private and professional realms. This can suggest that business is a choice rather than a necessity when motherhood is concerned. The women tend to focus on learning processes either through experiences in their personal lives or business ventures: "I think that is what I learned with juggling the multiples screens. Knowing what is urgent now and what needs my attention now" (I.12), and: "my gift to myself every year is that I need to develop something in my personality" (I.6). Such tacit essentialist conceptualisations and their enactments can reflect how gender roles are greatly instilled within them to the extent that they are unquestioned. Another conjecture is that women are socialised to be polite or diplomatic as not to express contentions with regards to gender disparities within the country. This can alter the ways in which they share their everyday realities. Hence, the theorisation or representation of entrepreneurship in Saudi discourses would not be in tandem with their actual experiences.

### ***Socio-cultural Barriers***

It is likely that both men and women in Saudi Arabia share barriers to entry to the entrepreneurial arena; women nevertheless can incur additional barriers by virtue of being a woman. Only one female participant, conversely, disagreed with the latter

argument and confidently asserted that the types of barriers exist similarly and equally to both genders; that is, there are no gendered barriers: “some things were just a dead end, not because I’m a woman...it wasn’t ever because I was a woman that I couldn’t do anything” (I.7). She in fact stated that there were no structural barriers: “there is no barrier. I haven’t seen any barriers” (I.7). One might assume that this is a nascent entrepreneur, who recently entered the entrepreneurial arena and witnessed the policy lifts. Strikingly, she was one of the established entrepreneurs with more than 10 years of business experience (when gendered policies were highly crippling). Such assertion is pivotal as it indicates the female entrepreneurs’ experiences are different although they, assumingly, go through similar legal and bureaucratic processes when establishing their businesses. It can be highly likely her embeddedness within a business family helped her navigate, or even not experience, previous gendered barriers. Other factors such as education, class, social capital and so on, might have enabled a more level playing field. Gender-role ascriptions and expectations emerging from essentialist conceptualisations of womanhood can hinder female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia and impinge upon their entrepreneurial aspirations. One example of such expectations, which can be construed as misogynist, is expressed by interviewee (I.12): “if I smile like a woman, if I giggle like a woman, if I put nail polish, if I put rings, if anything indicates that I’m a woman, it might create tension and then I won’t be accepted or I will intimidate them... its odd to them and then others were kind of like, frowning and one of them actually took a photo of me and took it to one of the government managements and said, this woman is not covered.” Nevertheless, these socio-cultural expectations are gradually shifting with the extant liberalisation reforms: “today the Saudi is cool, and I drive, I have a guy waving, I feel like I’m in California. Really” (I.12).

Although the study sample may not be representative of all female entrepreneurs in Jeddah specifically, most of the randomly chosen entrepreneurs held essentialist perceptions, but there was no inference as to whether these ideals per se affect their entrepreneurial aspirations. It was however identified that the enactment of a multiplicity of roles hinder their entrepreneurial progression, such as the responsibilities tied to motherhood. Therefore, it is the implications derived from these social values and expectations, such as social pressure or time constraints, and not the

values in themselves (except that motherhood values are inferred as key to social and national progress).<sup>69</sup>

### ***Regulatory Barriers***

Another way through which Saudi females can be institutionalised is through the regulatory environment. More specifically, the gender-specific policies, such as the male guardianship law, which subjected women to depend on a male figure for decisions such as renewing their passports, getting married, traveling abroad and so on. This subjugation is suggested to be extrapolated to women's self-reliance, autonomy and self-sufficiency and hence upon their entrepreneurial identities and endeavours. However, and as mentioned previously, this law has been recently loosened. Lavelle and Al Sheikh (2013) posit that such legal constraints can affect women entrepreneurs' self-esteem due to igniting feelings of frustration and self-blame at their lack of agency. None of the women in this study, however, stated that these gendered policies in themselves are hindering their ventures, and this law was not stated as a barrier. One conjecture is that they are within progressive families that did not abuse this law, or indeed, some women may have been reluctant to share personal experiences. Several of them expressed that it is the numerous processes and steps one should take to establish a business, regardless of your gender: "The Ministry of Trade gives you your CR (Commercial Registration), but then you have to go apply for another license from the ministry of media information or culture information at that time. So, there was no one stop shop or no set process that you have to go through... There were a lot of regulations that you had to follow" (I.9). The frustration underlying the latter statement illustrates the complex bureaucracies that many women in previous generations had to undergo to establish their businesses. There were, however, general requirements from business leaders to adhere to gender-specific policies with regards to the workplace: "separate office space, separate entrances, the

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<sup>69</sup> Another barrier concerns itself with their male counterparts. Gender relations in Saudi society, dictated by ideologies and stereotypes on gender, can play a vital role in defining a woman's business and her business identity. Some men are not adapted to the idea and "fact" that a woman is leading or directing them. Either women remain confident or attempt to alter their business personas to match the gendered expectations: "I have to be me... I can't just put a mask and do it because they ask me to use this language, or they ask me to wear this. I have to understand if it matches me." "it just liberated me to show up as my authentic me. Even if I'm risking being misunderstood sometimes or maybe unintentionally misleading someone or something" (I.12).

way the mixing or the meetings took place et cetera, you had to have a special license that had to be approved by the Ministry of Labour and they have to come in and do a check up and make sure that how the office layout is done. So, that all takes a lot” (I.9). Such legal requirements, to design workspaces that accommodate both genders separately, can have negative ramifications upon women’s labour participation as many may not afford to adhere to these policies. It is pivotal to point out that the ones who stated the latter are established entrepreneurs who have over 10 years of business experience. The variety or complexity of procedures was not evident among the new generations of entrepreneurs as now obtaining an electronic commercial registration is through the internet and it merely takes “180 seconds” according to the Saudi Ministry of Commerce.

The *Saudization* policy, officially deemed as the Nationalisation Scheme, was one of the most hindering regulatory barriers to their businesses. Some of the women rendered this policy as detrimental to their ventures as they were often obliged to hire incompetent Saudi nationals to fulfil the requirements of the job position. They also had to lay off other qualified foreign workers to meet the requirements of the rating system *Nitaqat* (see Appendix A 4.1), which is under the *Saudization* policy: “one of the biggest crippling one was the *Saudization* thing” (I.10), and “I was able to survive so many very difficult points, like *Saudization* in 2013” (I.6). Restricted business licensing was an incurred barrier to some of the women in this study’s sample echoing Lavelle and Al Sheikh assertion in their 2013 report. Prevalent “female” business activities are not often registered in the official list of licensed business categories. To be specific, business ideas that did not historically exist in Saudi Arabia such as women’s fitness centres, women’s health awareness centres, behavioural coaching and so on, were difficult to register. Women had to then register their businesses under a different yet similar business category: “I couldn’t obtain a license because there’s no such thing as a license for a woman’s awareness centre in the Kingdom. Before two years ago, it was illegal to have a women’s gym. You either do physiotherapy, or you have a hospital. I had to open it under the umbrella of my father’s company...as a side project” (I.7). These constraints can render some of the women’s businesses in the “shadow economy” as some women go about forging unlicensed businesses that are obscured from the formal economy as suggested by one of the female participants: “they call the home-based businesses, by the way, the shadow economy...They need



to register them and they need to put some criteria for operation” (I.10), and also by Lavelle and Al Sheikh (2013). Another argument put forward by the latter authors was confirmed by this study that is the infrastructure and support services such as childcare are also lacking, which is a concern among some of the women with children. Their argument around transportation, nonetheless, can be revisited since certain women can now drive as of June 2018, but there are still limitations with affordable public transportations such as busses. In short, there are regulatory barriers that cripple their entrepreneurial endeavours: “the real obstacle here for any entrepreneur is government regulation” (I.10). These are not addressed in any of the analysed magazines.

### ***Media as a Barrier***

The majority of the women hold negative views about traditional media in Saudi Arabia, and many of them choose not to be exposed to them. One of the most crucial interviews that I conducted was with a very renowned Saudi female entrepreneur who is also a very famous media figure in the Middle East with more than ten years of traditional media exposure. Her views echoed many of the female entrepreneurs’ opinions, which highlight how the traditional Saudi media, such as magazines, inaccurately portrays women, especially female entrepreneurs or businesswomen in general. There is a typified idealistic representation of Saudi society by highlighting female entrepreneurs as role models and showcasing success stories rather than shedding light on real barriers such as lack of networking, mentorship or resources. Some women felt no resonance with the representation of certain types of female entrepreneurs with no domestic responsibilities: “they [the media] celebrate and go “Ironman! Go! Kudos to you!”, and I think we’re gonna pay the price, because we’re not celebrating our domestic...media outlets where they are celebrating the boxing champion and the fighter, and they will pay the price, because women are homemakers first” (I.7). The lack of training for journalists was another point that some women touched upon: “why does media have to mean “cheap”? Why? Very stupid, doesn’t know how to ask questions, no respect to the guest. No ethics. One magazine took a picture of mine off the internet from 6 years ago, wrote a new article about me without my consent. They published it” (I.12). The following is a vital quotation, juxtaposing with the magazines analysis, stated by the renowned media figure, who is also an entrepreneur, in the Arab region:

“Yeah, so the media loves this idea of showing how well we do as a society by holding up these female role models, entrepreneurs and giving them a lot of space that everybody then thinks that all women have the same opportunities or are at the same level of success. But in reality, you are being knocked down, because you have, as I said, the network, the lack of resources, the lack of mentorship. Sometimes the inability to manoeuvre. Lack of access to knowledge” (I.11).

As discussed in Chapter 4, media plays a crucial role in constructing and organising discourse through which individuals, such as women entrepreneurs, can make sense of the world and the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship, for instance. Women in Saudi Arabia can then gain an understanding of their socio-cultural, economic and political positionality through Saudi media as well as through talking to one another. By drawing on Hall’s (1980) encoding/decoding model, however, the meaning that the women produce is also based upon how they construe these media messages, and such interpretations play a role in reconstructing the constructed. These interpretations are usually based upon norms, therefore, these women, arguably, are adopting their subjective and cultural frameworks of knowledge to decode the media messages. The women’s dissonance resonates with Woodstock’s (2016) media “resisters”, or in Hall’s terms “oppositional” readers, who refuse to engage with certain media technologies, and in this study’s case, it is traditional Saudi media such as magazines.

It can be then suggested women’s objective social reality can be forged by a paradoxical amalgamation of their separate understandings of womanhood and entrepreneurship as domains of experience, derived from endemic conceptualisations, and subjective experiences of female entrepreneurship as a whole. That is, although Saudi media has the potential of reflecting real experiences of female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, it does not however constitute both the objective and subjective realities of the interviewed women. Female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia, is hence an interplay between objective understandings of both womanhood and entrepreneurship and subjective experiences of the latter two. Drawing upon Gamson et al. (1992), traditional Saudi media does not reproduce social reality but constructs a conceptual image of artefacts or phenomena, such as female entrepreneurship, that are not “real”. It can also be suggested that traditional media in Saudi Arabia does not have a vital socialisation role, as put forward by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989, since it does not forge the “reality” (or women’s experiences) that is transmitted to the public.

It is then that the social element cannot be introduced by the media since the reality it is transmitting to these women is in contention with their experiences and hence, it cannot be reinforced by these women. In contention with Couldry and Hepp (2017), the traditional media in Saudi Arabia, in this study's case, cannot be a basic building block of social life nor does it enact vital social circumstances. However, it is partially interwoven with their social reality as far as privilege is concerned, yet the absence of specific "female" experiences illustrates the unequal gender relations imbued within these media discourses that consequently infers the dissonance between mediated and actual entrepreneurial experiences.

### **Strategies to Navigate Barriers: The Practicalities of Female Entrepreneurs in KSA**

Adapting to circumstances, prioritising responsibilities and organising time schedules were identified as the main utilised strategies to navigate both their entrepreneurial and personal realms. The above-mentioned barriers, such as limited licensing options and socio-cultural expectations, enabled some women to restructure their businesses (such as changing the name or registering it under a similar business category) to adapt to the hinderances they incurred. Adaptation also takes the form of adjusting some elements of one's business identity to match the expectations of clients or customers. The shifting priorities and planning of schedules are especially of concern to entrepreneurs who are also mothers. Bearing the responsibilities of two realms: "I think Saudi women are having a very hard time balancing the two roles. I think they're failing at it badly...You can succeed at it all when you pace yourself, and when you give everything its due diligence" (I.7) obliges women to cope up with time constraints and hence dictate upon them how to lead their everyday roles. The women recognised the importance of balance to organise their lives: "it's all about balance and it's all about delegating work and your personal life evenly" (I.19). More specifically, the seeking of balance by setting one's priorities enables women to navigate their business and domestic spheres: "that is what I focused on. I think that is what I learned with juggling the multiples screens. Knowing what is urgent now and what needs my attention now" (I.12). Another participant supplements the importance of balance: "I don't think you can separate anything, right? Separation is finite. Balance that comes

to play. In professionalism, with stress...Because when you're out of balance, you're stressed. That will also affect your marriage life or your business life" (I.10).

When construing the above accounts, especially of creating *balance* as a strategy, the concept of *discipline* comes to mind. Such accounts resonate with Foucault's conception of power within a social body that makes intelligible the ways in which humans are constituted as subjects, or for example, how women are subjugated to accept certain forms of identities or roles (e.g. "working mom" or juggling home and work). They also resonate with Foucault's "the genealogy of the subject" mentioned in his work *Discipline and Punish* (Lemke, 2002) in the ways in which women reinforce and re-construct historical modes of perceiving and enacting "womanhood". Foucault also introduced the concept of "governmentality" to analyse the link between what he referred to as "the technologies of the self" and the mechanisms of hegemonies, the creation of the subject and the formation of the state (ibid.). The term government, in addition to a myriad of significations, signified problems with self-control, guidance for the soul, and in this study's case, managing one's expected roles, such as observed by the study's participants. More specifically, the women engage in self-discipline and self-governance through the ways they organise their everyday "realities" to adhere to socio-cultural and even personal expectations. Women with such disciplinary propensities are thus in the process of "subjectivation" of one's self to pre-assigned and conventional notions of *womanhood* that render them as multi-taskers or indeed the *jugglers* of everyday-life's responsibilities.

## **9.2. From Struggling to Juggling**

The below figure (Fig: 1) depicts the realities conveyed by the sampled women; that is, the juggling of all the elements, delineated below, to enable them to perform the multiplicity of responsibilities they have.

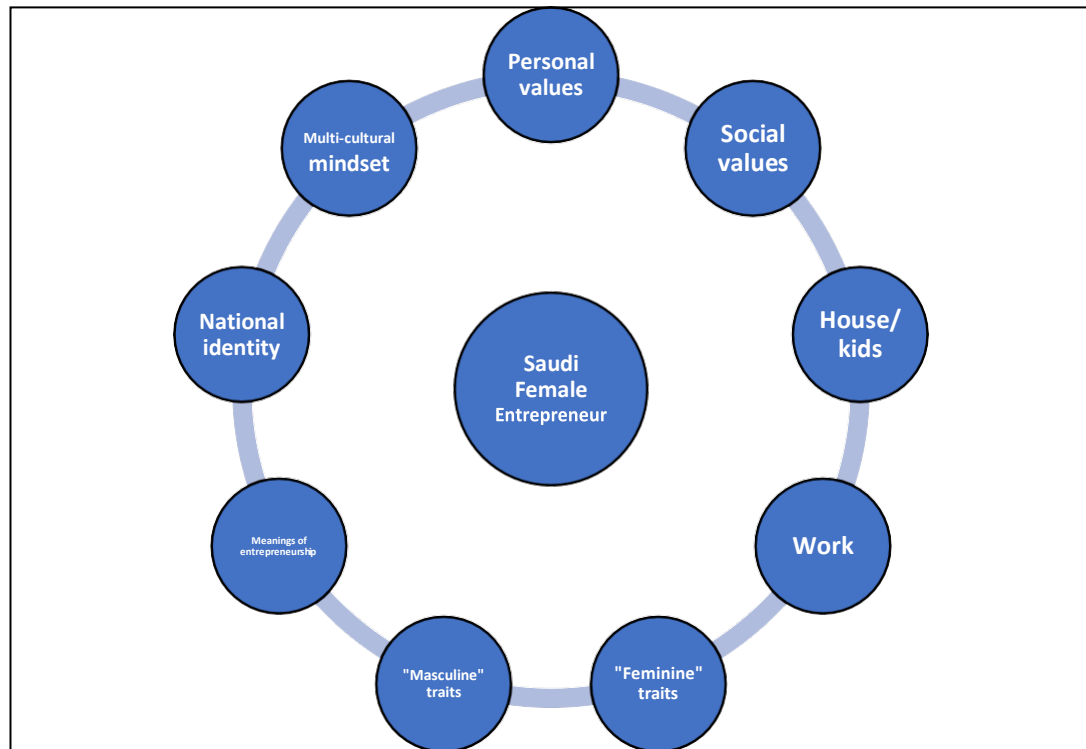


Figure 1: Elements Impacting Saudi Women Entrepreneurs (Created by the author)

It appears that the female entrepreneurs are in a state in which they are constantly negotiating a multitude of elements either revolving around endogenous elements such as their identities, personal tenets and values and exogenous ones such as social values and expectations. This consequently depicts women as “juggling” several elements of their everyday personal, social, and professional realities. Below I delineate the categories that the women entrepreneurs “juggle” and explicate how they map to (or embody) the elements impacting Saudi women entrepreneurs depicted in Figure 1.

**Juggling Essentialist and Socially Constructed Ideas:** This category embodies all the elements within the figure as they encompass values, traits, roles, and identity conceptions that can be stemmed from essentialist tenets about one’s self and subsequent roles in society while also encompassing values and pre-dictated notions of, for example, gender identity drawn from socialisation processes. For example, the women, as discussed previously, seem to hold essentialist notions of femininity and conventional ideas as to what women’s roles should be and how they should behave with respect to their values and socio-cultural norms. They also recognise the influence of socialisation processes that impact the extant gender-role disparities. This point is of value as it sets how women operate either in the domestic or entrepreneurial realm.

**Juggling Values:** From the interview data, the female entrepreneurs have expressed that they are highly motivated by values such as growth, improvement, achievement, and having power and authority over their businesses, which are values that revolve around their own self-interests. These are encapsulated in the element “personal values” in Figure 10. The women, although they have the motivation of self-improvement, they simultaneously have the motivation for equality, promoting the well-being of the community, and more specifically women, through their businesses. These allude to the “social values” element within Figure 10. They are; consequently, operating or “juggling” different value-systems; ones adhere to their personal needs and others to society’s well-being. These can be manifest through their personal objectives and business endeavours. They also value creativity and disruption; they work towards attaining autonomy, agency, a sense of freedom and change while operating within the status quo of conventionality and tradition. The women’s values or motivations exist in a dialectical relationship, which means that they do not merely attribute significance to values that adhere to their personal needs, but also the needs of other people. These women are, hence, “juggling” their values to enable them to enact entrepreneurship in ways that match their motivations and their contexts.

**Juggling Responsibilities:** Through the elements “house/kids” and “work” in Figure 1, I explain how, derived from the women’s gender-essentialist tenets, they construct or forge their daily duties. The domestic sphere was established as being the woman’s arena; taking care of the house and the children is one of the many responsibilities a woman should attend to. Not to mention that these are female entrepreneurs who also have career responsibilities that fall on their shoulders. The personal, domestic and professional overlap so do priorities, time and tasks. Women therefore find themselves juggling these priorities and tasks to adhere to each realm. There does not seem to be a separation of realms especially with regards to female entrepreneurs who are also mothers.

**Juggling Personal and Professional Traits:** These women operate within a field that, according to statistics, is conventionally male dominated. They comprehend the level of complexity and risk that is brought by the entrepreneurial arena, therefore, traits such as confidence, assertiveness, risk-tolerance and competitiveness, which were ascribed to

masculinity in the entrepreneurial literature, are also displayed by the women. These can be represented in Figure 1 through the “masculine-traits” element. Yet, they also brought about novel ways of performing entrepreneurship, which can be deemed feminine in the literature’s standards. Passion, compassion, emotion, resilience, strength, egalitarianism, solidarity and collectivism are some of the attributes that were highlighted by the women, which is depicted through “feminine-traits” in Figure 1 above. It is not clear nor stated by them whether entrepreneurship is a man’s playing field, but what is evident is that women are displaying what are deemed masculine traits in entrepreneurship while performing it in ways that fit their essentialist ideologies around femininity and womanhood. Negotiating divergent personal (feminine) and professional (masculine) attributes simultaneously enables women to construct and perform entrepreneurship in ways that reflect these shifting traits.

**Juggling the Conception and the Performance of Entrepreneurship:** The women hold traditional notions of entrepreneurship as a risky venture one that requires creativity, innovation and disruption and as a learning and growth journey. Their everyday experiences also impact the ways through which they conceive it. Being a woman, a mother, a caregiver, and so on, with a multiplicity of responsibilities that enmesh with being an entrepreneur enable them to conceive of entrepreneurship in ways that match this reality. It is performed in ways that perpetuate its ubiquitous conceptualisations while re-sculpted in ways that fit the women’s daily experiences. These conceptual and performative “alterations” add to its construction; as meaning does not merely reside in theory, but also in practice. This argument is exemplified in the above element “meanings of entrepreneurship” in Figure 1.

**Juggling National and Cosmopolitan Identities:** The elements “national identity” and “multi-cultural mindset” in Figure 1 demonstrate that, although the female participants speak with pride about their national identity, they perform it in ways that do not necessarily chime with the typified conservative Saudi identity represented in the media. These women are conversely “reservoirs” of multi-cultural identities and experiences, which render them negotiating a Saudi national identity and a global mindset.

What encompasses the “Saudi” identity to enable the identification that the women are performing a certain type of national identity? It is a nebulous term to identify but one that already subsumes beneath it conventionality, monarchy, patriarchy, Arabic-speaking nation, and other terms that elicit debates and controversies that are not directly addressed by the current study. Being Saudi myself with multi-cultural experiences and exposures, it is difficult to capture the closest meaning of what it means to be Saudi. However, by adopting the conventional discourses about Saudi Arabia as a lens, it can enable categorisation of the interviewed women as performing certain types of national identities, ones that do not closely depict the obsolete representations. Many of the women, in Jeddah specifically, either have multi-national identities (Saudi father and non-Saudi mother); obtain their higher education degrees abroad, use the English and Arabic languages interchangeably; watch Western programmes; read international books; register their children in local international schools and send them to international summer camps and so on. This varied exposure evidently impacts the meaning of *Saudi* as it is not an inert, independent concept. What is conveyed is both a sense of pride in being Saudi and a sense of devotion to the nation and its citizens, while adding to the multiple layers of the *Saudi* national identity as they think and live outside the conventional and reserved boundaries of mindsets and experiences.

The country is at a paradoxical juncture that is adapting to extant liberal ideologies, through socio-cultural reforms, yet still maintaining the autocratic structure that preserves religious and national values. These women are dissidents from the constrained representation of national identity, but depict Saudi Arabia in its current (socio-cultural) state. The types of national identity that they are performing do not portray the endemic representations of a Saudi woman, as seen in Western media, that is oppressed and subjugated. The performance of their Saudi national identity is, on the contrary, impacted by a multiplicity of factors such as: family background, cultural experiences, education, and more specifically their internalisations of national identity, which can affect the ways through which they perform entrepreneurship, or the “Saudi”-way of entrepreneurship as represented in the media.



The above deduction raises another critical point about the types of entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship that is being constructed in Saudi media discourses. As mentioned previously in the data collection method, the interviewed women were mostly found purposively on social media (Instagram) and a few through referrals. The interviewed women represent privileged backgrounds and occupy high classes in the social ladder. In addition to multi-national and multi-cultural orientations, class plays a fundamental role in determining who can become an entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia. Although some women had to start with minimal savings, they either belonged to a renowned family or had savings from previous jobs. None of the women participants represented the Western “rags-to-riches” discourse given the element of financial security. Although more interviews and research are needed, at this stage at least, it can be inferred that only certain types of women (multi-cultural, educated, renowned, and with financial privileges) can become entrepreneurs. And when tied to the notion of Saudi female entrepreneur, this implicates that class is enmeshed with a conception of national identity, which perpetuates the stereotypical conceptions of Saudi Arabia as being a wealthy nation. The identification of these limited types of women, despite the potential of finding a wide variety of individuals on social media, suggests that many potential women with entrepreneurial capabilities are underrepresented, which in turn constrain the notion of entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia and the types of individuals inclined to perform it. The conception of female entrepreneurship can therefore be imbued with class marginalisation, which sustains the capitalist facet of the Saudi economic structure.

### **9.3. Perpetuating Structures: Can Women Entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia “Juggle” It All?**

It seems that the women are attempting to “have it all”: a good career, well-taken care of children, a supportive husband, and some extra time for themselves. “All” to some of the women is striving to balance the latter elements as the main priorities to establish a fulfilling life while having the resources to do so. As mentioned previously, the women expressed no complaints about the “nature” of their gender-roles such as being mothers or caregivers, rather, they speak of them as innate responsibilities, and merely the implications of these (such as time constraints and sacrifices) that disrupt their daily routines. It is worth mentioning that only one of the participants stated that she

has the help of a housekeeper; other women never mentioned this known “fact” that capable women in Saudi Arabia, such as the ones I interviewed, have housekeepers that enable them to perform their other duties (work and childcare). This suggests that housekeepers exist but are not considered in the daily equation or are not deemed as part of the solution for all the juggling. The women are able to “juggle” work and family responsibilities at the expense of another woman, who is usually foreign and from a lower economic status.

Not only the latter, but also, the female entrepreneurs are perpetuating a gendered-structure in which women tend to do more of the unpaid labour given that they have to “juggle” all of their duties. Even though younger male generations in Saudi Arabia are becoming more involved in the housework, none of the women referred to the support of their husbands as helping with house chores; only moral and sometimes financial support is provided. Therefore, it seems, that these women can have it “all” if *all* meant a successful career, a nice house, a loving family, and a housekeeper (or even two and sometimes more). Not to undermine the women’s efforts in navigating their daily circumstances, but this missing element, of the housekeeper, resonates with the “triumphant” successful female entrepreneur character who is challenged but defeats all the odds. This defeat, however, can only occur with solid support systems, one of which is the housekeeper who might take most of the burden of the household chores and sometimes even help with taking care of the children.

#### **9.4. Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated the types of barriers that the sample of female entrepreneurs faced, and the types of strategies adopted to navigate these barriers. Although the types of barriers faced by the women were unsimilar, they share a commonality in terms of having different types of privileges that enable them to navigate their personal, social and entrepreneurial arenas. It is inferred that their autonomy is exercised on the expense of other women, who are normally foreign and from lower economic levels to partake in domestic responsibilities. The next chapter compares the findings from the CDA from Chapter 7 and the interview data to examine if there are vast differences between the mediated and actual female entrepreneurship experiences.

## Chapter 10: Discussion Chapter – The Paradoxes of Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

### 10.1. Introduction

This chapter compares the findings of the magazines' Critical Discourse Analysis with the obtained interview data to examine whether Saudi female entrepreneurs are socially constructed in the Saudi magazines as different or compatible with women's entrepreneurial experiences (conceptions, enactment, experienced barriers and formed strategies) outside these media discourses. That is, this chapter seeks to address whether the magazines depict a close "entrepreneurial reality" as one that is experienced and perceived by the sampled women or forge a typified construction of Saudi female entrepreneurs that is so distant from the women's experiences as to be a fabrication.<sup>70</sup> The findings reveal many paradoxes within the discourses of Saudi female entrepreneurship as depicted by the magazines and revealed by this study's participants. That is, the discourses of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia are imbued with dialectical oppositions that perpetuate Western liberal values and reify Saudi patriarchal ideals, while simultaneously celebrating and enabling female entrepreneurship in the context of both positive and negative portrayals of KSA circulating in the globalised media landscape. The chapter then summarises these findings and underlying assumptions about female entrepreneurship in KSA into three main themes, and discusses what is obscured, omitted or neglected within the discourse. Overall, the social construction of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia suggests that only certain women within the country are able to be entrepreneurs; these women are pioneers and are thus special types of women, but they are still imbued with essentialist traits and stereotypes that make them the primary caretaker of the domestic realm. There are, therefore, various *discourses* revolving around Saudi female entrepreneurship that are stemmed from and perpetuate paradoxical elements as delineated below.

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<sup>70</sup> This is particularly timely as during the writing of this PhD, *The Guardian* newspaper in the UK ran a magazine special on female workers, entrepreneurs and businesswomen in which it argued 'This is a country where society is shifting far more slowly than the official rhetoric'. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/jul/20/an-oasis-for-women-inside-saudi-arabias-vast-new-female-only-workspaces>, (Accessed: 02/09/201

## 10.2. The Paradoxical Discourses of Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

The below figure (Fig: 2 and Appendix G) was created to illustrate these paradoxes and to function as a substrate on which the conception of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia is made intelligible. In particular, it enables clarification of how Saudi female entrepreneurship is socially constructed.

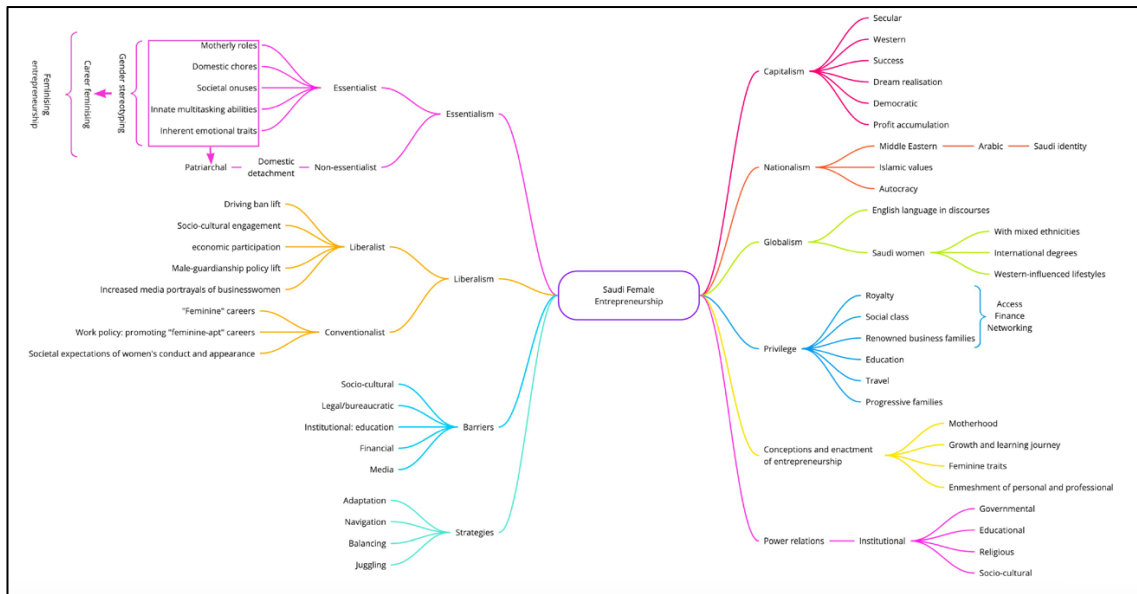


Figure 2: The Paradoxes Shaping Female Entrepreneurship in KSA (Created by the author)

The above figure amalgamates the analysis of the findings derived from the Critical Discourse Analysis of the sampled magazines and the interviews with the analysis of the Saudi context, which illustrates the elements constructing female entrepreneurship in KSA. The figure depicts the power relations, ideologies (e.g. essentialism, nationalism and liberalism), conceptions around female entrepreneurship in KSA in addition to the barriers women experience within the entrepreneurial realm and subsequent strategies adopted to navigate the identified barriers. Regarding the embedded power relations, structural powers are explicitly at play. These are institutional powers such as legislative, educational, religious and familial discourses that have necessary implications in constructing the women's entrepreneurial experiences. However, by drawing on Foucault, power should not be understood as only a group of institutions, structures and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of citizens of a state, as a system of domination, nor as a mode of subjugation (Foucault, 1980 p.92). That is, subjugating women to adhere to both domestic and economic needs, for instance.

Saudi Arabia's global image is deemed as a form of patriarchal tyranny and especially on women, which is being reinforced in the international media broadcasting Saudi women fleeing the country.<sup>71</sup> KSA is consequently working towards shifting this image by, to a certain extent, diffusing or decentralising power over to its citizens and especially that of women through their increased socio-economic engagements especially within the entrepreneurial realm. These, nevertheless, seem to be certain types of women who are educated, well networked and young, who are ideal for such reforms and who are more likely to be the beneficiaries of these especially through the exponential traditional media exposure in KSA. The women entrepreneurs can, arguably, practice power outside these platforms, such as magazines, by expressing their entrepreneurial identities, narratives and experiences through social media platforms. This engagement with social media seems to be reserved for women who are socially well networked, technologically and financially privileged and have a good deal of cultural capital as to compete with magazines, while other women from lower economic levels may not have the resources to do so.<sup>72</sup> This underrepresentation of certain women in both the Saudi traditional and digital media render many existing women entrepreneurs as shadowed and as operating within an informal economy and, thus, their experiences cannot be theorised.

Further, some Saudi women are also practicing power by increasing their socio-economic engagements and defying obsolete norms or forms of enacting womanhood. Surely, they must have certain types of privileges or indeed a form of power to afford (financially and socially) to combat such barriers. As such, power seems to be omnipresent; it can be found in all social interactions, whether in the domestic realm, the professional realm or even in women's responses to the media portrayals as opposed to only being institutional. However, and at least what the respective study reveals, this exertion of power is contingent on women having a series of profound advantages: they are well educated, technologically, socially and financially well-off

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<sup>71</sup> See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/25/now-i-own-my-life-saudi-sisters-who-fled-family-granted-asylum> and <https://www.businessinsider.com/no-regrets-saudi-sisters-hope-for-bright-future-after-hong-kong-2019-3?r=US&IR=T>, (Accessed 02/09/2019).

<sup>72</sup> There are accounts on Instagram or Twitter that promote women's products or services from lower economic levels. These accounts are often run through an intermediary between customers and the women entrepreneurs.

and who have the backings of their family support and names. These circumstances are not applicable to all Saudi women and thus these enabled women represent a certain percentage of the female population in KSA whose privileges are imperative for facilitating their entry into the economic realm and especially that of entrepreneurship. By focusing the portrayal on these types of women as entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship is rendered elitist reinforcing class inequalities and thus not a meritocratic field. Why is it the case while there does not exist employment processes for one to be “hired” as an entrepreneur? Drawing upon Friedman and Laurison’s (2019) *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged*, discussed later in this chapter, certain types of privileges, such as social class, enable some women’s economic engagement while exacerbating types of inequalities that intersects with entrepreneurial opportunity.

Alluding back to the notion of the omnipresence of power, it also implies that gender relations or conceptions of entrepreneurship, for instance, can be altered at the minute level of the individual. Therefore, power, as Foucault (1994b p.120) asserts, can operate by bringing possibilities to produce subjects that are capable of making decisions as a productive force. Although with the ostensibly increased decentralisation of economic power in KSA, there are micropolitical processes at play, and surely absences and silences as well. The changes in policies in favour of some women (e.g. loosening the male guardianship law and lifting the driving ban) and the exponential coverage of certain businesswomen, can reshape global, national and individual preferences, attitudes and perceptions on Saudi Arabia and its position towards women. In turn, it initially seems that these shifting attitudes are made from the bottom level of the individual while these are forms of power that are exercised at an institutional level, and especially when surveillance is concerned. Through these attempts of shaping people’s perceptions and conducts, the economic agenda can be fulfilled by both potential female entrepreneurs and global investors. Figure 3 below demonstrates the main types of institutional powers embedded within the discourses of Saudi female entrepreneurship.

Cultural norms stemming from (and in turn impacting upon) institutional discourses are, arguably, the most influential structural powers upon women’s entrepreneurial

endeavours. That is, institutions such as the State, media organisations (controlled by the State), religion, schools and family teachings can coalesce to produce Saudi society that set the expectations for female entrepreneurs embedded within the respective context. Culture was widely cited as a factor impacting women’s entrepreneurial ventures, as seen in Chapter 2. Strict interpretations of Islamic law, in particular, has exerted many constraints upon women’s rights and job opportunities (Basaffar, Niehm and Bosselman, 2018). This is attributed to the socio-cultural gendered ideologies that permeate the political culture, which is perceived to epitomise women’s domesticity and encourages sex segregation (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013, p.63). Saudi women’s agency in choosing their careers is hence limited due to social constraints (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011). These social values within KSA underpin highly conventional and conservative attitudes towards women, and therefore they are mostly found to enact domestic roles as the main caregiver of the family, which impact Saudi women’s entrepreneurial aspirations (Clarke, 2007) although it must be noted that these are gradually shifting in light of the extant “rebranding” of the country.

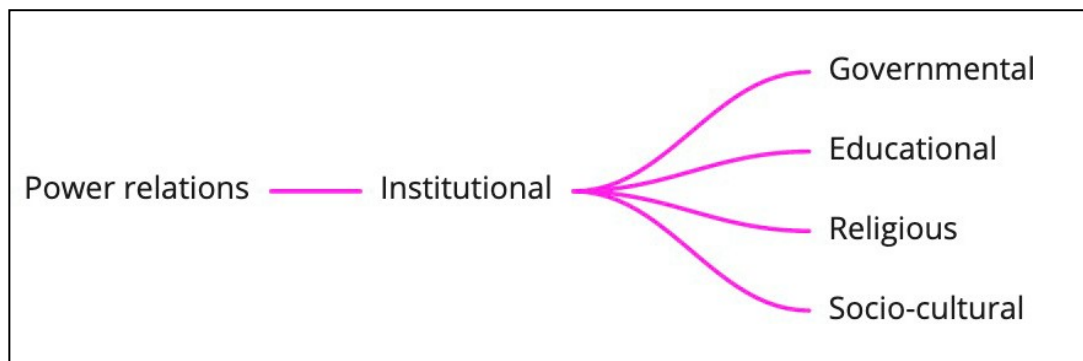


Figure 3: Institutional Powers Shaping Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

With regards to the embedded ideologies, several paradoxical ones are operating simultaneously to construct and represent Saudi female entrepreneurship. The first set of notions concern themselves with *essentialism* through which essentialist and non-essentialist ideologies are prevalent (see Fig: 4). Essentialist ideologies are ascribed to (by the media and the women themselves) Saudi women’s personas and roles. These essentialist thoughts are manifest in the ways through which women are ascribed with, for instance, motherly, domestic and societal roles (deemed inherent) in addition to biologically immanent multi-tasking traits. In specific, when comparing the interview findings with the results from the three magazines, there is an overlap with regards to essentialist ideas, domestic roles and motherly roles associated with the women. It is

worth mentioning that these findings are not consistent throughout the magazines, however, the above themes are found across them. With regards to essentialising women, the overlap is seen when ascribing women with societal obligations in KSA; in that, they are responsible for the well-being of society through preserving the family. Not merely by the magazines, but also, some women, who expressed concerns about maintaining Saudi tradition and values, make these ascriptions themselves. Other forms of essentialism are observed when generalisations are made about women or womanhood. For instance, the magazines generalise about women's interests (e.g. jewellery and beauty). Essentialising is also at play when a magazine, such as *About Her*, enmeshes women's entrepreneurial endeavours with motherly roles by inferring, through its questions, they are inevitably associated with a woman's identity or daily practices such as work.

Some women also introduce themselves as mothers, which can also imply its inextricable enmeshment with one's persona. Two of the magazines, *About Her* and *Entrepreneurs KSA*, allude to the women's domesticity. One suggests that it is a woman's natural context and another, through its questions about family preservation and life-work balance, also infers the latter. The interviewed women in this study also assert the innateness of motherhood roles, domestic chores and familial and societal preservation. These essentialist tenets, arguably, lead to gender stereotyping, which is a form of cultural essentialism, that perpetuate socio-culturally constructed forms and notions of femininity, and are reinforced by other members of society (i.e. other Saudi women). These ideologies are highly likely to enmesh with women's professional personas and hence their entrepreneurial identities. Since there are essentialist perceptions towards femininity and appropriate roles, these must be followed by perceptions of appropriate feminine careers that determine and confine the fields in which Saudi women entrepreneurs operate (which was evidenced through this study's empirical research). The specificity of entrepreneurship to women's essentialist notions, feminine roles and choice of traditionally "feminine-typed" careers, render the field as feminised and hence the feminisation of entrepreneurship.

Gender stereotypes that permeate Saudi society can have an impact on the types of careers women choose or the types of fields in which they operate. It cannot be asserted



at this juncture whether women “choose”, by virtue of their gender, specific fields deemed feminine or is it a case of limited opportunities in other “male” dominated fields (e.g. STEM fields); or they gravitate towards low-value service sectors due to feasibility of access. What is evident at this stage is that in the history and potential transformation of KSA, women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia dominate “feminine-typed careers” such as retail, health, design, fashion, art, events management, social entrepreneurship, life/behavioural-coaching, fitness coaching, culinary fields and so on.<sup>73</sup> Saudi women’s career types are consistent across both the magazines and the interview data. There are women, on the contrary, deemed by the media as entrepreneurs due to their inventions and unprecedented work in fields such as rocket engineering, medicine and technology. All in all, gender stereotypes can partially explain Saudi women entrepreneurs’ gravitation towards fields endemically recognised as “feminine” or low-value service sectors, then the research sample confirms or embodies the myth of the female entrepreneur (see Marlow, 2020). As seen in Chapter 2, Saudi women are embedded in professions that are perceived as feminine and remain in less eminent professions or positions than their male counterparts due to the prevalence of sex segregation by occupation (Almobaireek and Manolova, 2013).

There is, conversely, a permeation of non-essentialist notions of womanhood that detach women from their conventional domestic and caregiving roles such as being a mother, a wife or a caregiver, which are constructed as an inventible constituent of a Saudi woman’s identity in numerous institutional discourses. This detachment per se can allude to two things: it liberalises women from obsolete domestic personas but creates an association with the Western male entrepreneur, who is often romanticised as the rugged lone “wolf”. Many Saudi women, however, do indeed embody these conventional roles; to suggest this detachment (the public from the private), then, renders the portrayed female entrepreneurs analysed in this study as fictive characters and distant from “real” entrepreneurial experiences. Saudi women, despite their increased socio-economic engagements, may remain in a “never-ending” patriarchal

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<sup>73</sup> This begs the question; how does this differ from democratic national contexts? Are these not the fields associated with female entrepreneurship in the UK, France or USA for example? Female entrepreneurs in the UK dominate the following sectors: Personal Services (64%), Apparel / Clothing (49%), Arts / Crafts / Hobbies / Photography (49%), Healthcare (40%) and Education (39%). See <https://www.business-live.co.uk/enterprise/small-and-medium-enterprises/south-west-highest-number-female-16459596>, (Accessed: 12/09/2019).

structure with ephemeral feelings of liberation due to these conventional constraints that remain unaddressed, let alone questioned. The following figure depicts the paradoxical amalgamation of essentialist and non-essentialist constructions of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia.

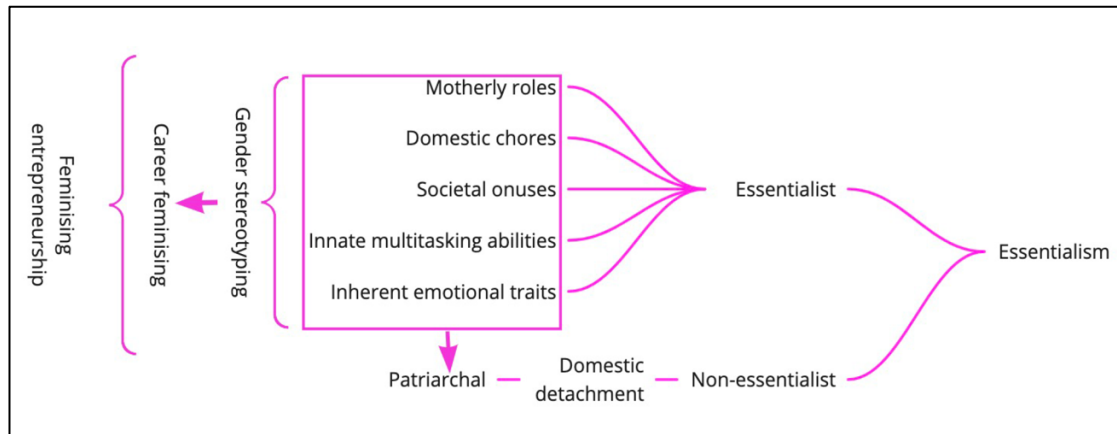


Figure 4: Essentialist and Non-Essentialist Ideologies Shaping Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

Other pertinent ideologies revolve around liberalism and conventionalism (see Fig: 5). The discourse of liberalism attached to female entrepreneurship is manifest in various ways. First, the change in KSA policies regarding women, such as the driving ban lift and loosening the male guardianship law, facilitated some women's mobility and economic engagement. Although the latter policy was not explicitly mentioned as a direct barrier in this study, it should be recognised that similar gendered policies can hamper women's entrepreneurial endeavours. Second, the increased governmental initiatives, discussed in Chapter 2 and Appendix A, play a vital role in ameliorating women's socio-cultural and economic engagement. That is, the State has made significant changes and incorporated programmes to liberate women further and increase their participation in different aspects of life such as the socio-cultural, economic and to a certain extent, the political realm.

Saudi media also plays a role in reifying this liberalisation process by exponentially featuring women's businesses and entrepreneurial experiences. These changes can reflect the gradually shifting expectations revolving around women's roles (by society and the women themselves) in terms of leaving the domestic realm for professional reasons. There remains, however, the confinements of culture and tradition that set expectations for women to adhere to familial needs before professional ones, and to

be “decent” especially in the public eyes by preserving their modesty through the Abaya (i.e. traditional Saudi women’s robe). As such, women engage in the social and economic realm but abide by cultural expectations (that entail cultural interpretations of religious discourses) to do so.<sup>74</sup> Surprisingly, Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman stated that women have the right to wear whatever “modest” attire they want (60 Minutes, 2018), but Saudi society is still not ready to “unveil” them.

Further, Saudi women’s engagement in specific “feminine” careers operates in contention to these liberation movements. The gravitation towards these careers is a manifestation of workplace policies that stipulate women are to operate within “women-friendly” careers that match their “nature”. The featured women in the magazines that work in specific fields suggests a particular type of female entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia. That is, the specificity of the fields, the women’s contributions within these fields and their socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds are some of the primary elements through which the Saudi female entrepreneur is constructed. The following image is a summary of the above discussion.

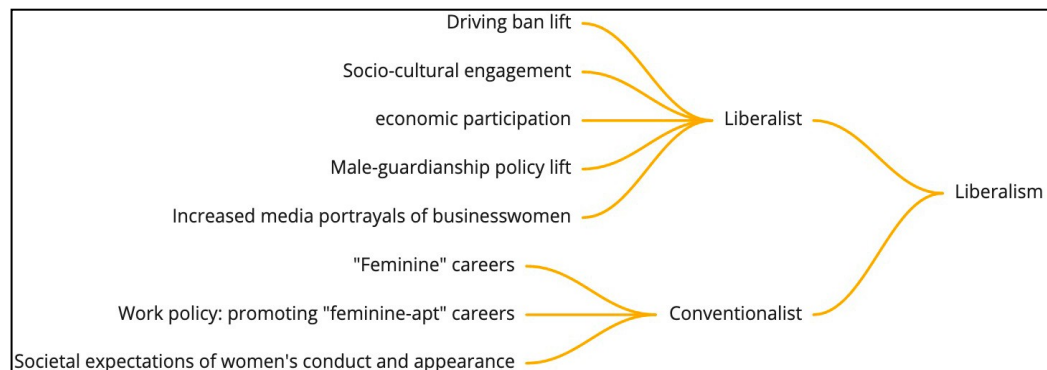


Figure 5: Liberal and Conventional Ideals Shaping Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

Capitalist ideologies and Western ideals that permeate Western media and literature such as success, profit accumulation, achievement and dream realisations are prevalent, not surprisingly, since the discourse addresses entrepreneurship.

<sup>74</sup> There are certain policies and cultural norms that are disguised by interpretations of Islamic teachings or discourses. For example, there are no religious or Islamic verses that stipulate women need not drive or lead in businesses, but cultural values that prevailed over generations were manifest in policies such as the, now lifted, driving ban or the sex segregation in workplaces. There are efforts; however, by some religious scholars to legalise certain cultural norms by “handpicking” certain Islamic discourses that justify the implementation of specific policies.

Saudi Arabia seems to adopt or even adapt capitalism to fit its new reforms that encapsulate Arab (Saudi in specific) nationalism, moderate Islam and a freer market economy. Not only through the magazines, but the State also promotes the nationalist agenda through Vision 2030's messages that stress the significance of maintaining the Saudi national identity. Again, there is a paradoxical enmeshment of the Western, secular and, to a certain extent, democratic capitalist ideals with a Middle Eastern, religious and autocratic structure. Some discourses are imbued with globalism, that is contrary to the promotion of the Saudi nationalist discourse, which is manifest in disseminating Saudi ideals and perspectives on entrepreneurship in Saudi English magazines. Let alone the magazines' choice (in addition to this study's sample) of Saudi female entrepreneurs, who are from divergent ethnic backgrounds (e.g. American mothers), with international university degrees and lead a Western-influenced lifestyle (especially women in Jeddah), is exemplary to the globalised dimension of Saudi female entrepreneurship. The representation of a Saudi national perspective of entrepreneurship seems, therefore, nebulous at this juncture since it is interrelated to many aspects external to what the term "Saudi" entails as it stands alone. When one examines the history of Saudi Arabia, they can find that indeed Saudi Arabia was, and still is, a melting pot of divergent cultures and ethnicities that made up the country. Is KSA hence alluding to its multi- culturalism that is manifest, for example, in the ways they represent entrepreneurship to create proximity to global investors? The below figure (Fig: 6) illustrates the juxtaposition of ideologies that encapsulate the discourses of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia.

There is also a tacit construction of Saudi female entrepreneurs as privileged, or in other words, there are privileges owned or experienced by the women that enable their entrepreneurial or economic engagement as summarised in figure 7. In particular, the magazines depict royal members with social enterprises as entrepreneurs, which is in contention with the "rags to riches" Western discourse usually associated with an entrepreneur. Some of the women, further, come from privileged backgrounds, not only royalty but also renowned business families within the country. These women have other types of privileges that revolve around power and access, finances and networks within the country. Most of the women are educated in the sense that they hold higher

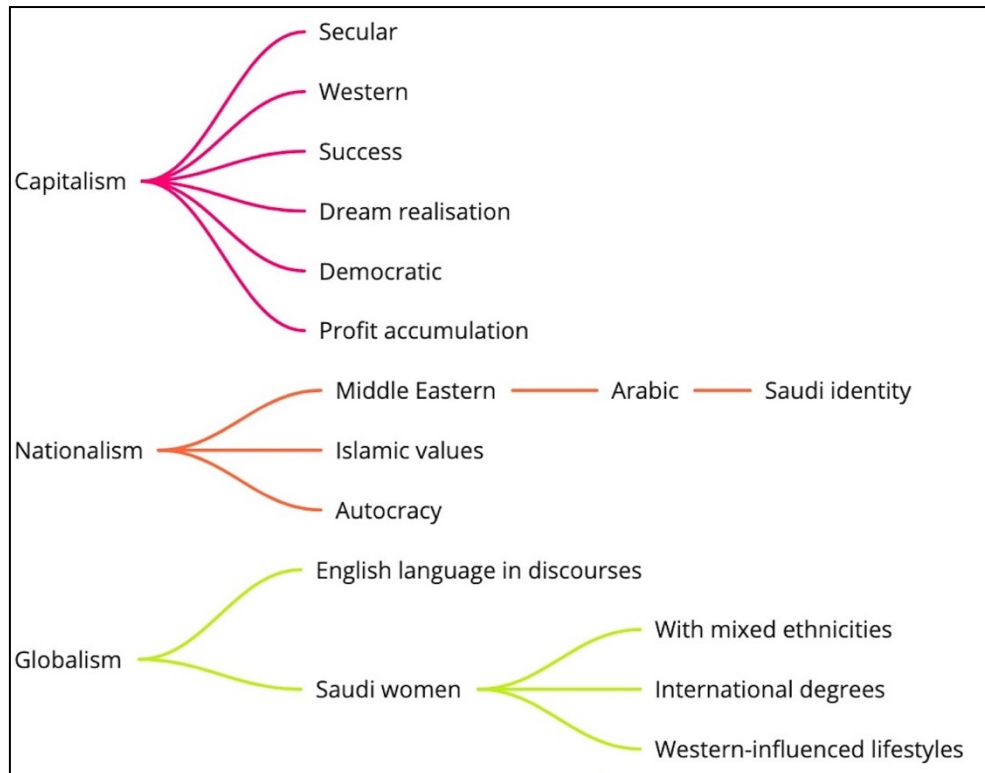


Figure 6: Juxtaposition of Ideologies Shaping Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

educational degrees, which are mostly from international countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, and they also speak English, most of them fluently. They also seem to have travel opportunities, which is a type of privilege to some women within the country, given the familial constraints upon many of them. Very recently, however, there has been a change in policies that allow women, over the age of 21, to travel without the consent of her male guardian; a vital development in women's rights long-awaited for from the Saudi State. With regards to progressiveness, women who belong to a very conservative family can hinder their entrepreneurial or socio-economic participation for limiting public exposure or male- interaction. Being within a liberal family (relative to the Saudi context) is a privilege as women have more freedom to a certain extent to work, choose their careers or become entrepreneurs.

The shared incurred barriers revolve around socio-cultural factors (see Fig: 8). Although there are numerous individuals embracing such reforms and especially revolving around women, there are many citizens on social media such as Twitter who convey their disapproval of such developments as they, in their views, do not mirror "their" Islamic teachings. This unreadiness can also be attributed to the essentialist ideologies revolving

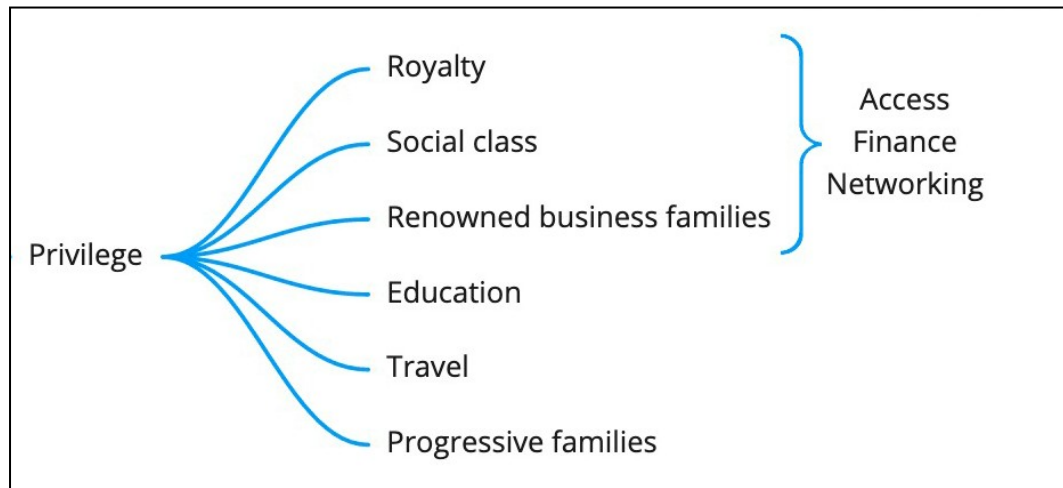


Figure 7: Privileges Enabling Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

around women and their respective roles ascribed to the domestic realm in preserving the family’s honour through the woman’s “decency” maintained away from the public gaze. Misinterpretations of Islamic verses or how religious teachings are construed hindered women’s public engagement, which can also explicate why members of Saudi society condemn the current reforms. Other prevalent forms of barriers are legislative such as the *Saudization* policy, discussed in Appendix A, or the inability to obtain governmental financing until one quits her employed work. Other barriers revolve around the bureaucracies of establishing a business in terms of complexities, inconsistencies or lengthy processes. Lack of education, networking, human capital and essential professional training were documented as vital impingements upon the female entrepreneurs. Saudi traditional media, such as newspapers and magazines, was not perceived as a direct or explicit barrier by the interviewed women. Nevertheless, the ways in which the women lack resonance with the mediated forms of female entrepreneurship can obscure “real” entrepreneurial experiences and in turn, render their conceptions and enactments of entrepreneurship opaque. That is, by not making cogent how women’s viewpoints, daily circumstances or their interactions with certain discourses impact their entrepreneurial ventures, predominantly excludes the entrepreneur from the entrepreneurial process.

With regards to the adopted strategies (Fig: 8), there are no consistencies among women with regards to how they navigate the barriers as this can be attributed to their different situational aspects. It is nevertheless necessary to highlight these as many women, who are not yet represented, can incur similar forms of barriers and hence can

benefit from these strategies. Some of the latter entail adaptation and alteration of some aspects of the women's professional identity or practices to match social expectations. Another form of strategy is the navigation of the system (especially for more established entrepreneurs who opened their businesses before the extant reforms) by, for instance, establishing their businesses under their family's or register it under a different yet proximate business category. The latter was the case when businesses (such as women's gyms) were prohibited and not recognised. The primary strategy that seems to combine these women's experiences is working towards a "work-life" balance through prioritising familial and professional obligations. These attempts, as mentioned by some of the interviewees, do not necessarily enable women to divide time equally between the family and the business. It therefore seemed that they juggle, among other factors discussed in Chapter 9, work and personal responsibilities due to the instability intrinsic to the "balancing" process. Others, although not strategies per se, highlight familial support or self-financing as aiding their businesses.

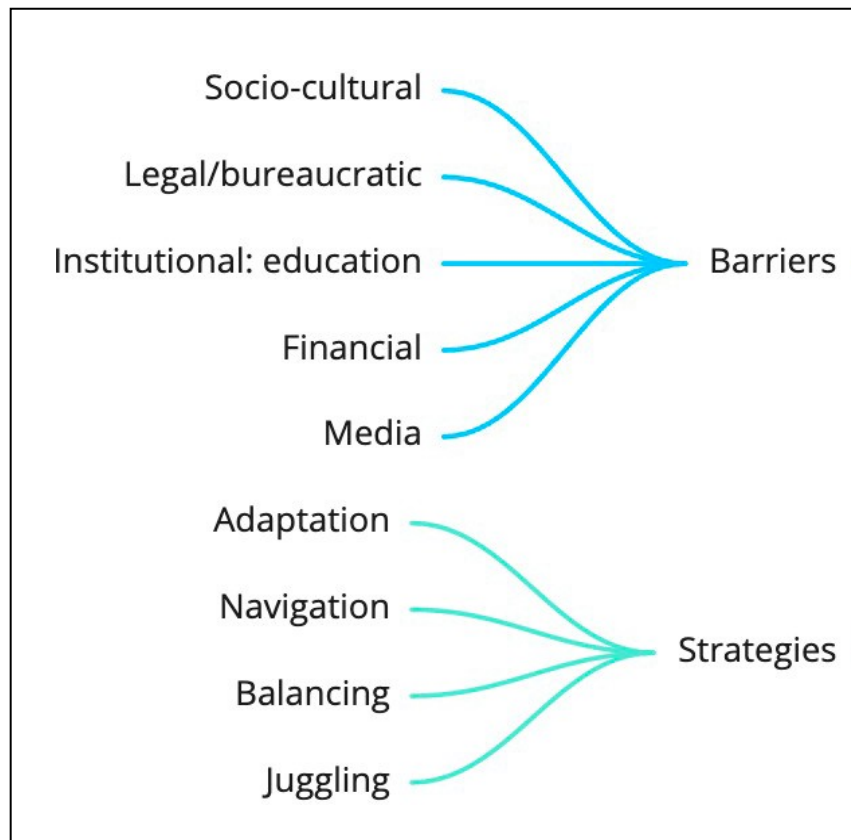


Figure 8: Barriers to and Strategies for Female Entrepreneurship in KSA

### 10.3. Then, What is Female Entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia?

From the obtained discourses, the analysed magazines and interviewee data, female entrepreneurship seems to operate in a dialectical opposition between different ideas as delineated above. First, is it a “feminine” representation or experience? Alternatively, is it a perpetuation of forms of masculinity and patriarchy? It is indeed feminised in ways that depict the specificity of the Saudi female entrepreneurs’ experiences, yet the women seem to engage in domestic, repetitive and caregiving work that perpetuate patriarchal forms of women’s servitude and subordination. Similarly, female entrepreneurship in KSA is feminised due to the “feminine” traits (deemed innate to women) ascribed with the women’s endeavours (such as its inextricable enmeshment with motherhood roles) yet, the women seem to abide by or perform conventional “masculine” characteristics associated with entrepreneurs such as aspiring for self-autonomy and having risk-taking tendencies, as seen in the entrepreneurship literature discussed in Chapter 3. Other ways of sustaining masculine forms of entrepreneurship is through detaching the domestic realm, which is very likely the realm of the woman in Saudi Arabia, and in so doing, entrepreneurship, in certain instances or in certain magazine depictions, suppresses women’s real experiences and thus maintains the masculine version of entrepreneurship that is embedded within the public realm. Therefore, female entrepreneurship is indeed specific to the women’s experiences, yet some of the magazines’ depictions portray the conventional male-centric entrepreneurship. It can be hence deduced that the constructed discourses of female entrepreneurship are feminised yet adhere to conventional and Western notions of entrepreneurship.

Second, female entrepreneurship in KSA is liberating, yet strikingly, constraining. It is liberating in respect to moving women outside their domestic realms in which they were always confined: that is, liberating them from obsolete structural and cultural norms that restricted their socio-economic engagement due to gender-role stereotypes or expectations. Further, it is liberating in the sense that women are becoming less reliant on the male figure of the family (by loosening the male guardianship law with regards to women’s work) and hence *certain women* are becoming autonomous (by driving, opening bank accounts, and making their own decisions) and less dependent upon their male guardian (e.g. father, brother, husband or son). Conversely, engaging in the field of entrepreneurship, creates an indirect constraint due to the socio-cultural



expectations associated with women's work. That is, it appears that women are either voluntarily choosing specific careers or fields, that are conventionally deemed feminine, by virtue of their gender or are limited in their choices due to constraints in work opportunities. These, as discussed previously, can stem from cultural discourses with regards to ascriptions to femininity or womanhood that are then extrapolated to career choices. Engaging in entrepreneurial ventures in Saudi Arabia can thus be simultaneously liberating and constraining, as first, it enables them to step outside their essentialist roles and work. Yet, and secondly, it constrains them due to their confinement to specific careers (disregarding whether it is a choice or lack thereof) not to mention the constraints emerging from adding other responsibilities outside the domestic realm. They accordingly find themselves strategizing in ways to create the clichéd "work-life balance", which was expressed by some of the women as a struggle.

The third emphasis is on the specificity of the Saudi national perspective and implementation of female entrepreneurship as a globalised representation. As seen in the magazine discourses, the Saudi national identity agenda is being promoted while choosing the English language in two of the magazines, choosing multi-cultural Saudi women (e.g. with American mothers and British degrees), and while associating entrepreneurship with Western ideals of dream realisations that are most likely seen on American media, and with a meritocratic discourse based on English class and cultural capital. Not to undermine women's aspirations, but it is to stress that only certain educated women are entrepreneurs, and especially in Jeddah that is the focus of this study, who are often highly Westernised. Therefore, it is an amalgamation of East and West in forging discourses of Saudi female entrepreneurship.

The fourth paradox is the impact of Western secular capitalism operating within an Arabic religious nation; wherein the measure of success is econometric, the tradition, community and observance may be at odds with success. Religion, or Islam specifically, is inevitably interwoven in most of Saudis' everyday lives. Almost every aspect of their lives entails religious influences and work is not an exclusion. It seems, therefore, that the country, or the women themselves, were able to merge Western and secular ideals of capitalism that entail success, profit-generation, achievement, and consumerism with religious values of integrity, fairness, and respect (which are not specific to Islam) to perform their entrepreneurial duties. Also, there are occurrences

of mentioning God as the reason for their accomplishments, that is, they attribute their entrepreneurial successes to God (seen as male), and therefore the enmeshment of work and piety can be evident. The latter can be extrapolated to any Muslim nation, but since the study concerns itself with Saudi Arabia, the discussion of the results will consequently be limited to it.

Fifth, an aspect of the phenomenon which is not a contradiction per se in Saudi Arabia but presents a challenge to the entrepreneurship “rags to riches” discourse, entrepreneurship in KSA is reserved for the elite and indeed the privileged in Saudi Arabia (able to take risks due to security of family and high levels of education). This was inferred from the data within the gathered magazines’ articles and the conducted interviews. Social class, education, business-family background, progressiveness, financial accessibility, networking and travelling are some of the privileges culminated in the respective study that enabled some women to become entrepreneurs and not others. With the above in mind, I was able to coalesce these findings into themes or (constructs) that made intelligible the obtained data.

In general, there are situational factors that can shape entrepreneurial discourses and behaviour and make the gender differences in entrepreneurship intelligible (see: Hisrich and Brush, 1987; Brush, 1992; Fischer et al., 1993; Brush and Bird, 2002 cited in Elam, 2008 p.4). More specifically, there are probable sources from which those divergences can arise, these can encompass: the tendency of women being engaged in entrepreneurial functions at a young age, the lack of industry-related experience (Hisrich and Brush, 1987; Brush, 1992; Fischer et al., 1993 cited in Elam, 2008 p. 4) and the lack of technical education. Female entrepreneurs also have less powerful networks, work fewer hours, have more domestic-role responsibilities, adopt conservative strategies and use less start-up capital than their male counterparts, some of these are confirmed in the interviews and especially with regards to the domestic realm. Women also tend to pursue entrepreneurship very differently (Brush, 1992; Brush and Bird, 2002 cited in Elam, 2008 p.4) due to their different values. The latter can be extrapolated upon female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia who do not usually have networking, financial and training capabilities except for privileged segments of society. With regards to the gendering of entrepreneurship, this can be elucidated by referring to the political economy of Saudi Arabia. The magazines do not explicitly

depict this social and political reality of KSA, however, such patriarchal structures embedded in the socio-economic and political systems are embedded within the concept of entrepreneurship, especially in the magazine *Entrepreneurs KSA*, when representing the field as predominantly and normatively male while highlighting “female” entrepreneurship as the alternative.

#### **10.4. The Established Constructs/Themes**

This section is inspired by Ahl’s (2002) doctoral research, and other key articles (2005; 2010), as there are some proximities with regards to how women entrepreneurs are constructed (in the entrepreneurship literature in the author’s case). From all the complexities and paradoxes observed in the social construction of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia, as delineated above, there seem to be explicit constructs to be extracted. By adopting Foucault’s theory on discourse, discourses entail what is included as well as what is excluded, discussed later in this chapter. These inclusions and exclusions per se inferred underlying assumptions with regards to Saudi female entrepreneurs and their positionality within the socio-economic realm. That is, there are several inferences as to regard Saudi women entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial process in KSA, the socio-cultural realm, the regulatory environment and respective policies, and most significantly, the conception of an entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. Below, I discuss these constructs or themes and the implications they can have upon women’s positions.

##### **Theme One: The Elitist/Privileged Entrepreneur**

When one of the interviewees, who is married to a highly renowned businessman in KSA and who is associated with high-end luxurious brands, stated: “I think we’re all basically middle class. I don’t know what we’d call ourselves...” (I.8), it sheds light on how privilege is conceived differently within a Saudi context. Other statements such as: “in the summer camp, I honestly feel I’m middle class, because a lot of it is insanely expensive” (I.10), and “I started my company with about 2,500 Dollars, which is nothing...I worked from home and I slowly grew”(I.1), also raise attention to the nuances in conceiving and perceiving privilege based on the context. Some of the above interviewees, as will be seen below, have networks with members of the

Royal Family and such social classification can be plausible for them to make given the extreme wealth held by the royalty. It is speculated that some of these women can make such statements due to comparing their financial circumstances to other wealthier families or are simply downplaying their privileges.

The sampled women, in addition to many Saudi female entrepreneurs in similar conditions, hold varying privileges that enable their entrepreneurial engagement, which cannot be experienced by women from lower economic levels. The latter women may have financial aids from the government or philanthropic institutions, but these women are not widely represented in either the sampled magazines or the interviewees. My assertion that they are marginalised in terms of their representation is derived from recognising they exist and are represented in certain media discourses. Even some of the interviewees acknowledged this lack of representation of underprivileged women in the Saudi media: “you don’t see the American version of rags-to-riches story tale. It’s very far and rare to listen to somebody, a woman that came from what would be a poor family or a hard background and hard upbringing and now is running a corporation or has a very successful business. It’s not that it doesn’t exist, it’s just harder to see” (I.6). Another respondent supplemented: “there is a woman that was selling at the traffic light when I first moved here. Her son would come every day at 4 o’clock at the traffic light in front of my house every day, and we would buy the ma’amoul<sup>75</sup> from him. We finally asked him the story. He said, “My mom makes the ma’amoul because my dad died, and it’s the only way she can feed us.” Now, she has a shop. That’s a story they [the Saudi media] should tell. Not the basketball girl or the boxing girl, or the Ironman” (I.5). Another respondent shares: “I’d love to see showing an entrepreneur from Hayil or from Qaseem and not somebody who comes from a wealthy family, but somebody who really had to scratch the surface” (I.7). Indeed, the elitism embedded within the Saudi discourses of entrepreneurship is evidenced in several ways throughout this study. First, and as established previously through the CDA and interview findings, very specific types of women with different types of privileges in the country are being represented or deemed as entrepreneurs. When I adopt the term privilege, I do not merely allude to the financial capabilities, but also, I refer to the various advantages that these women have over underprivileged women in establishing their businesses. That is, in addition

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<sup>75</sup> Arabic pastry or biscuit usually filled with date paste.

to being privileges, they are evidently enablers that aid in facilitating women's entrepreneurial engagement. To further explicate, by analysing the sampled women's profiles, experiences and lifestyles, I was able to identify common and varying types of privileges shared by some of the women. Some of these identified privileges are delineated below and exemplified by the findings derived from both the interviews and magazines.

First, Table 5 illustrates examples of Saudi female entrepreneurs who are either royalty, friends with royalty or worked with royalty; that is, they are associated in a way or another with members of the Royal Family. It is not only being a royalty that is associated with prestige and elitism, but also being their "friend" and working in their organisations render one's social status as prestigious given the exclusivity of such relationships or access in Saudi Arabia. Not to mention the effect this access has on the female entrepreneurs' networks and subsequent opportunities. Aside from that, is the mere fact that a royal person has been deemed an entrepreneur, which can cause debates within the entrepreneurship discourses and raise the eyebrows of the Financial/Capital School of Thought advocates. Being of royalty defeats the main premise of the latter school of thought that is the making-it-on-one's-own process. Many would argue that financial risk is a vital constituent of being an entrepreneur and should one have the financial security, they cannot be deemed as such. However, some of the interviewees believe that it is not the lack of finances that determines a person's entrepreneurial capabilities. The argument that these sampled women do not fit into the respective school of thought can also be applicable upon the next point that demonstrates the second type of privilege identified through this study's findings.

The second type of privilege revolves around being embedded with a business family or having a renowned family name (due to the business). Some of the sampled women entrepreneurs, as seen below in Table 6, grew up in a family business background that affected, in addition to numerous things, the ways in which they lead their businesses, as demonstrated by Interviewee 16. This is a type of privilege as first, they observe and engage from an early age with their families, which can endow them with perceived innate business skills, as conveyed by interviewee 7 (see Table 6).

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Social Status/ Royalty/Networks with Royalty</b>	“Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud is an entrepreneur and social activist...”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Alf Khair is a social enterprise founded by Princess Reema Bint Bandar that targets social development...”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – November 2016
	“Reema Bint Bandar who I’m sure you know from the General Sports Authority. She’s a friend of mine.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“[Prince] Al-Waleed Bin Talal...supports handicraft industry. They have a humanitarian section. So, I was dealing with [it]”.	Interviewee 8 (I.8)

Table 5: References to Social Status/Royalty/Networks with Royalty

This gives them an advantage over many women who do not have the privilege to acquire business skills from an early age that can also be free of charge. Second, being embedded within a family business and having a renowned family name facilitates building networks and doing business, as exemplified by Interviewee 13. Not only does it facilitate doing business, it can make suppliers forgo perceptions about doing business with women should they hold them. Third, having a family business facilitates some of the women’s business endeavours. That is, they can open a business under the family’s (e.g. I.5, Table 6) and can experience less risk than when establishing a separate enterprise. The latter will be highlighted later when discussing risk. Fourth, embedded within a business family can be a privilege as they usually have a financial safety net to fall back to. The availability of finances is another type of privilege that is discussed in the ensuing point.

The third type of privilege that the sampled women have, or experience concerns itself with the availability of finances. The female entrepreneurs had various resources from which they were able to establish their businesses: some used their own savings (i.e. from previous job salaries); some obtained financial support from their families; a very few were supported by investors and finally one female entrepreneur funded her business through a loan. Obtaining loans from banks is predicated on having a source

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Business Family/Family Business/Family Name</b>	<p>“Every conversation at the dinner table is about the business. Every trip the family takes, there’s going to be a business meeting, and you’re going to attend. As a child, you might be in a business meeting. I grew up feeling total ownership of this business.”</p> <p>“I was able to speak to an owner of a farm, and he wasn’t really concerned if I was a male or a female. He knew that I’m from a good family, a well-known family...I think it had a role to play. Having a family name and being trustworthy might’ve made a difference for him.”</p>	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	“We grew up in a family business...I founded the business under the umbrella of the company. My father’s company, which we were all shareholders in.”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)
	“My influence in business has been my father, who was a big businessman in his time. His work ethics and hardworking attitude has influenced me today, and I find myself walking in his footsteps. He started from nothing and built himself slowly but surely.”	Interviewee 16 (I.16)
	“Work and business and doing projects, these things was always in our blood.”	Interviewee 7 (I.7)
	“My grandmothers are Amazing. They have their own bank accounts. They sit ... So, growing up, I saw them. They had their family businesses. My grandmothers had a way to make their money. My grandmother used to knit and sell, cook and save, sells antiques and rugs...so this entrepreneurial mindset, I saw it. I experienced it.	Interviewee 10 (I.10)

Table 6: References to Family Business/Business Family Background

of income or any type of collaterals, and therefore, only certain women with financial privileges can obtain these. The fact that these women had previous jobs, as will be exemplified below, and were able to have savings indicate they have a certain type of financial independence and have additional finances as to enable them to make savings. Many women in KSA who have working fathers or husbands and who are embedded within “comfortable” social classes do not usually pay basic bills (e.g. utility bills), and therefore, whatever salary they obtain can be saved or used for personal needs. This is not to neglect working wives or daughters who financially

contribute in the household, but to shed light on that there are many women in Saudi Arabia who are capable to have savings due to their supporting family. There are also women in the country who do not work but have a comfortable and decent living due to a usually supporting male family member. Table 7 (and Appendix F.1) demonstrates examples of the financial security or privileges that the sampled women have.

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Financial Security</b>	“I was making \$10,000 and just enjoying my summer even more.” “...so I started my company. It started literally with a \$5,000 saving.”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	“The kids say, “Mama, you could be pooing money right now.” I’m looking at them. I’m saying, “Yeah, I could, couldn’t I? But I just don’t know how.” That’s not really my focus...”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	“I had SAR100,000 to start my [businesses]. I got that from my father, but he didn’t give it to me to start the businesses. He gave it to me because it was a part of profits from the company, so I ended up with that and I chose to put that in the businesses to start them.”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)
	“It started out with the money that I’d make from the sessions to go back in it. ...It’s also nice to not worry about financials when you have someone [husband] taking care of you as well.”	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“I have been financially independent since I was in high school because I got a scholarship.	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“I did really well financially 2014, 2015. And if we compare it to salary, I would consider myself paid really well.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“I hate taking loans or asking for loans. I try to start businesses and concepts in my own means.”	Interviewee 6 (I.6)
	“I did not get any help from my father.” “I have zero investors or financial support from outside.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)

Table 7: References to Financial Security

There is growing recognition within the Saudi context that there are governmental schemes such as interest-free start-up loans and collaborations between banks and



media organisations that incubate entrepreneurial ventures.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, these initiatives are not alluded to by the women. Very few women had financial support from external resources such as investors. It is then very clear these are self-financed women and are financially-well off as to require funding. If this (finding proximate financial resources to establish a business) is not deemed a privilege or an enabler, what could be? These women do not only seem financially-well off, but also, they had the security of their previous jobs which, in some cases as seen in Table 8, are positioned in high managerial positions.

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Jobs/Highly-Ranked Positions</b>	“I got appointed to the board of directors of the Chamber by the Minister.”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	...Dean of Skills Development and Nuclear Physics professor... (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i> – June 2016
	“Her first job [in family business] was entering invoices. But since that didn’t suit her well enough, she swiftly rose to the ranks of General Manager in less than two years. In the meantime, she was also launching Yatooq, which was founded in July 2012.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“When I was at the SME Authority as a Vice Governor of Entrepreneurship Advancement...”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	[I was] CEO of Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz’s [initiative] for women’s development. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i> – December 2016
	“She signed up for a job that allowed her to do what she loved doing everyday which is graphic design...”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“I had a very good job beforehand.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)

Table 8: References to Jobs/Highly - Ranked Positions

<sup>76</sup> See for example The Centennial Fund in KSA.

I can only speculate, due to the absence of requiring finances and having “decent” jobs prior to their entrepreneurial endeavours, the women are not categorised as necessity entrepreneurs, in that, they are not “pushed” by financial constraints to become entrepreneurs. In other words, it cannot be asserted to what extent some of these Saudi women have economic urgencies and rely on the government to be entrepreneurs. What is hence to be stressed is that these women are embedded within upper-middle class social stratum and higher, which forges entrepreneurship as a career reserved to the elite given the lack or absence of *necessity entrepreneurs*. This absence in itself suggests the privilege of choice; the freedom for some women to choose to be (opportunity) entrepreneurs. There are various examples in both the sampled magazines and interviews that imply the women to be categorised as opportunity entrepreneurs (see Table 9 below and Appendix F.2). To further substantiate, many of the women refer to aspirational factors as motivation to be an entrepreneur such as realising a dream, pursuing one’s passion, expressing a hobby, fulfilling a personal or a social need, filling a gap in the market and so on. That is, the sampled women are motivated by “pull” factors to open their own businesses and they are thus categorised as opportunity entrepreneurs. There are, nevertheless, some “push” factors that are not financially driven such as the need for personal growth or autonomy.

It is however striking that some of the above-mentioned women somewhat detach themselves from being privileged by, for example, expressing that obtaining capital is not always easy. For instance, Interviewee 6 stated: “...the start-up capital is very difficult..., if I’m privileged and I come from a good family, and my father’s like I’ll give you the money and I don’t have to go to the bank. All of these things help. *The more privileged you are the easier it is for you to break barriers*. I’m not saying I’m the most privileged person in Saudi but I’m saying that yes, my parents are very supportive to whatever extent that they can be supportive. There are other women that are around me that have achieved a lot more because their parents can give them a lot more.” Another respondent also distanced herself from privilege: “I come from a very middle-class family. My dad [worked] for Saudi Airlines. I’m in no way privileged. I actually got this question from someone online. They said, “That’s easy for you to say, coming from Saudi privilege.” And I said, “What is that- Saudi privilege?” Saudi

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Opportunity/ Personal Motivations</b>	“Albukhari opened and ran a cafe in her parent’s store, before realizing that her true passion is art and organising art events.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> –April 2016
	“Their yearning for a deeper understanding of their history planted in me a passion for providing these accounts of legitimised documentation.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> –February 2017
	“I started it because I like to be inspired and surrounded by talent.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018
	“AlSaleem is planning to help families in as many areas as possible, and even other GCC countries, as she has big expansion plans.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“She signed up for a job that allowed her to do what she loved doing everyday which is graphic design, only to realize that she was not given the opportunity or the platform to really express and explore the many things that she wanted to do. “That was the main drive for me to go out and start my own thing.””  “Nurturing a mere once-upon-a-time passion has landed her as founder of two creative design studios today.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“With a philanthropic aim to spread happiness and give back to those less fortunate, Jumana is an inspirational female powerhouse who knows no limits when it comes to fiercely and consistently achieving her goals and dreams without neglecting her family.”  “Motivated and driven by her daughter, she started her enterprise in 2014 from her dining table to her garage...”	<i>About Her</i> magazine

Table 9: References to Opportunity/Personal Motivations

female working in an industry that has zero men where I was one of *the firsts* to come in?”. The latter examples, and the ones at the beginning of this section, reinforce that the perception of privilege in Saudi Arabia is associated with, and perhaps constrained to, one’s social class as they relate to other members of society. To stress again, the concept of privilege, in this study, does not merely concern the financial wealth of

individuals. It is a term espoused to elucidate the various factors that are not equally distributed amongst citizens (i.e. wealth, opportunity, access) and that certain people within the country possess that enable their entrepreneurial endeavours. Saudi Arabia is a relatively rich country and is portrayed in the mainstream media as such. Therefore, it may not be surprising for many non-Saudi individuals there are born-privileged entrepreneurs. What could be striking however, is that some of these privileged women do not deem themselves as such (or not as fully privileged) due to the different ways privilege is construed and inferred. At least for this study, privilege and its various forms are the advantages, seemingly not explicitly recognised, that facilitate some Saudi women's economic engagement and especially that of establishing a business.

Another form of privilege that these sampled women have is of education. It is worthy to mention that thousands of Saudi females from different social classes obtain governmental scholarships to complete their higher education abroad or locally; can access governmental schools freely and receive monthly allowances and incentives to work and study in a State-owned university. Therefore, the education privilege is not only limited to certain types of women within the country. Even if the sampled women did not explicitly convey it through the interviews or in the magazines, several of them obtained their higher education from governmental universities, which can be identified from the university name. Some of these women are privileged to travel for their education and experience other cultures either through their own expenses or through scholarships. The source of funding was not highlighted except by Interviewee 1 who stated that she obtained a scholarship in high school, and by *Entrepreneurs KSA* that stated one of the Saudi female entrepreneurs was the first Saudi to obtain a scholarship from Cambridge University to pursue her Doctoral degree. Otherwise, it cannot be asserted to what extent the sampled women relied on governmental scholarships to obtain their degrees. Regardless of the latter, having educational degrees can be a form of privilege as it is usually an indicator of intellect, skills and sometimes social prestige especially if the degree was obtained from a highly renowned and prestigious university. Having quality education can sometimes be a factor for better job opportunities in KSA. That is, women can benefit from higher salaries when applying for jobs depending on the level of education obtained. Appendix F.3 demonstrates examples of the types of degrees that the sampled women

have. Other forms of privileges entail the types of access that enable establishment or growth of their businesses. Aside from education, there are other forms of access. Numerous women use technology to do research and market their establishments, invest in their skills through training or workshops, are invited as guest-speakers at business events or universities and are partnered with renowned names in business as seen in Table 10 below (see Appendix F.4 for evidence from the magazines).

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Access (information, training, networks, and media)</b>	<p>“I invest a lot in my trainings, they’re all international trainings. I pay a lot of money. So, I can’t charge 200 SAR or 500 SAR per hour. Who is going to afford it? But there are ways.”</p> <p>“From all of these concepts we look at in our workshops, I get the workbooks from America, I have the whole content.”</p>	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“I grew through collaboration. I collaborated with every single person in Jeddah. Either through an event, either through a workshop, you name it.”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	<p>“So, when I did my internship program one of the best firms here in Jeddah, I found out that this was not something that I wanted to do and working for someone and listening to what they had to say and what they think is right was not me.”</p> <p>“What helped the business was that we conducted a lot of research into design all around the world.”</p>	Interviewee 17 (I.17)
	<p>“Media is my business’s driving force. It is what made it grow. Social media particularly played a crucial role in expanding and growing the brand to reach out to the thousands of followers.”</p> <p>“When I do interviews, I am natural while always keeping in mind the need to be culturally-relevant.”</p>	Interviewee 2 (I.2)
	“Some of the interviews that I appreciate is, for example, I had two...one in <i>Laha</i> , one in <i>Latifa</i> I guess. There’s one in the UAE in English. There are a few that really wrote about me in a nice way.”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	“After a certain time, I told them, I’m not doing anymore interviews. I don’t want to be featured.”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)

Table 10: References to Access

Further, the women's descriptions of their lifestyles in both the interviews and the magazines (see Appendix F.5) suggest they relatively have decent and comfortable lives. They, for instance, travelled from early ages, sent their children to summer camps and enjoy art and music. There are also references, especially in some of the interviews, to their domestic settings (e.g. I.4 Table 11 below), what shows they watch and books they read (e.g. I.8 and I.10 Table 11), and the existence of a housekeeper (e.g. I.9, I.13 and I.8 Table 11), which is not a surprise for many families in KSA. These insights or the elements around the women's lives indicate that they are far from being necessity entrepreneurs or from lower economic levels. Family support is also a prevalent theme amongst the women's narratives (see Appendix F.7). This is a type of privilege as not many women in Saudi Arabia within conservative contexts can realise their potential in entrepreneurship given the nature of the field. Very often female entrepreneurs are required to deal in public spheres with "foreign males" such as, investors, suppliers or customers, which is not acceptable within many conventional Saudi households. Another way through which privilege is deduced is the absence of financial barriers. It was discussed previously that some women had secure jobs, personal savings, the backings of their family's business and some were friends with royalty. All in all, the absence of (mentioning) financial barriers can be due to the extant privileges women have that enable their economic participation, and hence the elitism ascribed to the field.

Therefore, how does this type of financial privilege, or other types for that matter, relate to the concept of risk in the entrepreneurship literature? After all, is not risk a fundamental and inevitable component of an entrepreneurial venture? Indeed, these women are inexorably linked to the risk associated with, as Cantillion asserted as seen in Chapter 3, the uncertainties of the economy, market and prices, but what are these women really risking and who can actually afford to take-on these risks? To address the first part of the above question, the women seem to be risking *personal capital*. In that, they are using their own finances or their families' to establish their businesses and in turn, they are diminishing their safety nets, especially for women who rely on their own expenses. Another form of risk is that of *reputation*. Given that some of these women are renowned within the country, their personal and business reputation is at stake. Especially within a context that have expectations, and possibly doubts,

with regards to women's work and success. Saudi women may hence feel the need to prove themselves within the business realm. The latter point was echoed through one of the interviewees who stated: "I feel like I have to work that much harder to prove that I can be an equal or a peer to men" (I.6). Their reputation within the Saudi community is contingent upon their business success, which can, understandably, pose great pressure upon them to maintain their prestige and networks. Other pressures, and a form of *personal risk*, relate to time and health. The "juggling" act that the women engage in to adhere to both the professional and domestic realms can take a toll on one's health by sacrificing personal time and needs in addition to affecting family relationships and business performance. That is, some women can also risk their *professional success*, as seen through some of the interviews, by attempting to balance both the public and private spheres. These are exemplified in the following interviewee's statements: "...inability to devote as much time to the business as needed, because I was a working mom, so entrepreneurship was my second job. Actually, third job" (I.9) and: "before [daughter's name], I had my business, my clients, my traveling, so when she came everything got messed" (I.10).

As with regards to who can afford to take on risks, it is evidently women with the identified privileges. From the study's findings, it seems that the entrepreneurial realm in Saudi Arabia is favouring the already privileged. To further stress, when I adopt the term *privileged*, I allude to the women entrepreneurs who have, in varying degrees, socio-cultural and economic capital, whether inherent or acquired, that endow them with advantages over other members of society to establish their businesses. This is not to suggest that economically privileged women do not have merit to be entrepreneurs, but to assert that they have less barriers than other women from lower economic levels to navigate. The underrepresentation of the latter types of women is an indication of the elitism of entrepreneurship. Drawing upon Friedman and Laurison's (2019) concept, *the Bank of Mum and Dad*, the material inequalities between Saudi women from different backgrounds suggest the inequalities in opportunities available to them. That is, some Saudi women from renowned business family backgrounds can afford to be entrepreneurs given the financial security and accessibility that facilitates their entrepreneurial ventures. This can also render them as less risk-averse than other women from lower economic levels, for the former can fall back on readily available resources should the business "go bust".

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
Travel/Lifestyle/Cultural Taste	“I was born in Sri Lanka, moved to Korea, moved to Malaysia, then moved to Saudi.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“I’ve lived all my life in Jordan and then Jeddah...I love to travel.”	Interviewee 7 (I.7)
	“I grew up in the States, between States, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia.”	Interviewee 9 (I.9)
	“I grew up in the States as a child. Then, we came back to Saudi...”  “In the summer camp, we feel sometimes, I honestly feel I’m middle class, because a lot of it is insanely expensive. How can I pay this amount? I’d rather to go Egypt and stay there for holiday.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“I got married at the same time I started my personal business... I can travel wherever, because we were traveling the first year. We moved around quite a bit... It was nice to be able to have my business with me wherever I went...”	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“I have a TV, but I watch Netflix on it.”	Interviewee 6 (I.6)
	“She’s [Jane Fonda] a guru. She did the exercises. She had a tough life. She’s the daughter of an actor, Henry Fonda. Now, she’s acting in a mini-series called Frankie and Grace. You have to watch it. It’s hilarious.”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	“I read <i>Women who Run with the Wolves</i> , and it changed my life.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“Despite having help, nanny, my parents living close by, etc., I was at home every day from 5:00 to 8:00 with the kids doing their homework until they fell asleep.”	Interviewee 9 (I.9)
	“Lydia? Lydia, can you do the vacuum after because I’m on the phone? Okay? thank you.”	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	“So I called her and said “How about we have tea in my garden?””	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	“Wait. Let me just tell them to get me something to drink. Can I have a cup of tea? But put a little bit of stevia? Put a little. Thank you.”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)

Table 11: References to Travel/Lifestyle/Cultural Taste



Financial capital can also mean that these women can be sent abroad to obtain their education or enhance their business skills that enable navigation of the entrepreneurial realm. Although business requires merit to seize its opportunities, these can be dictated by non-meritocratic elements such as financial inheritance or cultural capital. The latter were also perceived by Friedman and Laurison as factors explaining the variations in social mobility and why some people, more than others, have more opportunities accessible to them. Cultural capital such as education, taste, skills, the way one dresses, the way one speaks and so on, are deemed social codes that make certain people “fit in” in certain occupations. Surely entrepreneurship requires one to be, for example, polished, well-educated and skilled to obtain the right networks and investors, which consequently favours Saudi women displaying and fitting into these moulds. The sampled women’s profiles supplement that they fit into these required traits. These social codes, nevertheless, and as the latter authors inferred in their book, can have an isolating effect on people not familiar with or not embodying these codes, which can exacerbate the class ceiling in careers such as entrepreneurship.

Given that on the surface (Saudi traditional media, Vision 2030’s messages and this study’s sample) entrepreneurship is reserved for a very few or for certain types of women, other women who do not necessarily resemble these educated, skilled, and technologically privileged women can, in Friedman and Laurison’s terms, “self-eliminate” themselves from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures or seizing entrepreneurial opportunities. This elimination is not due to their inability or because they are lacking, but due to the apparent structural barriers in the entrepreneurial realm despite the State’s efforts in ameliorating “all” women’s economic positions through policy changes. The country, however, is seen as an elitist system in which there are hidden mechanisms or informal codes (such as that of *Wasta* or nepotism) that benefit the already privileged. Similarly, there are informal systems and unwritten codes of professional advancements in the business realm that favour the affluent, as posited by Friedman and Laurison, or the well-networked.

Although Friedman and Laurison’s book concerns the class inequalities in the UK labour market, its assumptions can be extrapolated to this study and KSA due to the underrepresentation of *necessity entrepreneurs* within Saudi Arabia that render entrepreneurship as a field for the very few, and indeed for the privileged. The

meritocratic discourse of entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia, in light of this study's analysis, is hence unequivocally lacking due to the emphasis on specific privileged women entrepreneurs as seen in the examples above. The representation of these types of privileges hence suggests a class ceiling in the Saudi discourse of entrepreneurship. Tying this with the conception of entrepreneurial risk, these privileges denote better entrepreneurial and networking opportunities, and therefore, reducing the privileged women's chances in immersing themselves in risky ventures. Also, given the Saudi traditional media's emphasis upon specific types of successful, well-educated and polished women, the concern about risk can thus revolve around maintaining their *social capital*.

The discussion of privilege needs to be interwoven with the discourses of entrepreneurial opportunity. The latter infers a meritocratic process through which all members of society have equal chances of becoming entrepreneurs, but the Saudi narrative on entrepreneurship suggests otherwise, at least from what is represented within this study's samples and timeframe by depicting certain privileged women seizing these entrepreneurial opportunities. Saudi women from lower economic levels are highly likely immersed in a reserved, religious and conventional social structure that is imbued with essentialist notions of womanhood, which dictates orthodox feminine roles usually ascribed to caregiving, child-rearing and domestic chores. Not only are they constrained in their conventional gender roles, but also in recognising entrepreneurial opportunities, which render them as economically invaluable in light of the Saudi media's "obsession" with the economically successful. There are numerous Saudi women from lower economic levels and in rural areas who have artisanal boutiques that are not represented in this study's samples. These women are entrepreneurs and they can indeed contribute in economic growth, but they are not, as stated previously, portrayed in the business and urban lifestyle magazines. The intersection of their gender and lower social class can pose impediments to their recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities let alone the recognition of the conception of entrepreneurship. Interviewee 7 echoed some of the latter by stating: "not all the women in Saudi their businesses are on Instagram or on fashion, or make-up or catering. There's quite ... If you go to Qassim, Breda, there are women who launched a coal factory and they're all from a very ... They built it because they needed it and they were actually supported by one of the charity organisations. They face issues because they're not a big company and so the bigger companies dominate the market.

They can't sell in the big supermarkets because who's going to display their products. That's the thing, is that, we're not showcasing [in the media] so we're not opening doors." All in all, the elitism of entrepreneurship in KSA is manifest, as illustrated in figure 9 below, in the following ways: the specificity of representation of women entrepreneurs with economic, cultural and social capital; the lack of representing governmental loans aiding women's endeavours; the lack of portraying necessity entrepreneurs (portraying only opportunity entrepreneurs) and the lack of depicting barriers, financial ones to be exact.

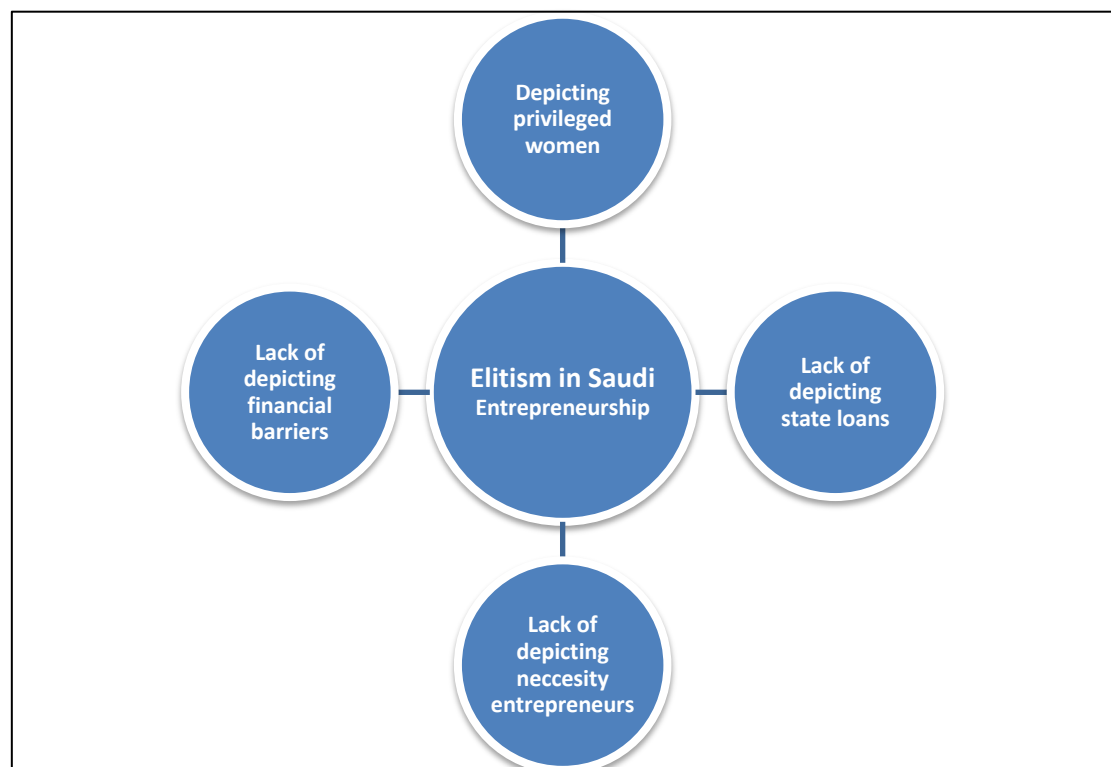


Figure 9: The Elitism of Female Entrepreneurship in KSA (Created by the author)

The next theme demonstrates how the sampled women are portrayed as polished and successful, which can be attributed to the above privileges.

### **Theme Two: The Never-Failing Entrepreneur**

The discussion around failure is completely lacking from the three sampled magazines. The sampled women however, referred to failure in three ways: some referred to personal failing experiences, others discussed failure for women in general (in KSA) and others tied conceptions of entrepreneurship with failure as an inevitable process. Appendix F.8 summarises the latter three ways. Eight out of the 19 interviewed women

discussed failure. Others portrayed an idealistic image while two of the magazines refrained all together from discussing barriers. These typified depictions construct entrepreneurship as a seamless field and entrepreneurs as ever successful and never failing. Indeed, the “never-failing” entrepreneur is thus constructed. Only one magazine, *Entrepreneurs KSA*, asked the women entrepreneurs questions around obstacles they faced throughout their careers. The answers within the magazine, however, can be characterised as either diplomatic or reserved. Perhaps, these answers, or lack thereof, reveal the workings of privileges in limiting the types of barriers the women experience. The magazines’ editing processes can also help in constructing entrepreneurs as successful through whom they choose to portray, or the types of questions asked. The interviewees of this study were more insightful in that they shared the obstacles they experienced revolving around bureaucracies, policies and motherhood roles. Only a few were blunt to either explicitly or tacitly share their failing experiences. Appendix F.6 illustrates the construction of entrepreneurship as seamless.

The respective theme is also constructed by heightening, if not solely focusing on, the women entrepreneurs’ achievements in the magazines. The ways in which the magazines describe the women through appraisal, as seen through the CDA, also suggests the success and accomplishments revolving around the female entrepreneurs. Tying the above constructions with the Arabic translation for *entrepreneurs* (i.e. pioneers of businesses), it infers the entrepreneurs’ leadership, success, uniqueness and heroism, which are far from any references to a failing entrepreneur. The depiction of the Western entrepreneur in Western media usually showcases a narrative with an “underdog” in a fluctuating and non-linear route while struggling before “making it”. In the Saudi narrative however, or at least in the analysed samples, the female entrepreneurs seem instantly successful and heroic. As seen previously, there is an individualistic discourse embedded in the representations of the magazines. This individualism is also manifest in the Saudi discourses of entrepreneurs as pioneers by highlighting the success and economic contribution of the individual female entrepreneur. There is lack of references to structural elements as aiding women’s entrepreneurial endeavours, such as governmental initiatives, and they are hence sculpted as heroic figures within the country. Echoing Ahl’s (2002) findings, the represented Saudi women entrepreneurs are inferred as exceptions in comparison to

“regular” women through the appraisal used by the magazines, as seen in the analysis. The attribution of women’s success to their personal or business choices can render other women to be blamed for their entrepreneurial failures. This success bias is summarised in Appendix F.9. These representations of all-positive entrepreneurial accounts infer the existence of safety nets (or privileges) to ensure less failure. Therefore, how does the absence of failing discourses construct Saudi female entrepreneurship?

Failure is inherent in the business process, especially in the entrepreneurial venture, and certainly has implications on the construction of entrepreneurial identities. Failure is also incumbent for an entrepreneur to experience for eventual success.<sup>78</sup> Although this study does not investigate *failure* as a constituent in constructing Saudi women’s entrepreneurship, it is, nevertheless, necessary to briefly discuss, as failure can play a vital role in shaping women’s entrepreneurial identities, experiences or indeed entrepreneurial inclinations. As seen previously, Burton (2016) suggested that the Saudi culture tends to be a risk-averse environment and as such, people tend to refrain from entrepreneurial ventures to abstain from the social ramifications associated with a failing business. In a sense, this fear experienced by Saudis can be valid, as we live in an individualised epoch in which failure becomes personal (Lambrecht and Beens, 2005 cited in Martinez Dy, 2015) and the business failure is attributed to the “lazy” or “not working hard enough” individual with “not good enough ideas”, which results in associated emotional distress (Shepherd, 2003; Singh, Corner and Pavlovich, 2007 cited in Martinez Dy, 2015). To exemplify how experiences of business failures or struggles affect some of the women, one participant shares her distressful experience: “it was an experience. I closed, and I regret it a bit, but it wasn’t worth it. It was taking me away from my coaching, from my group work, from my training, I was so overwhelmed by logistics.... I was lost. I was burnt out. I decided to close it” (I.10). Another interviewee shares an emotional experience: “when we started the business, we were struggling with our family business...We really struggled. It was really emotional and very hard on us because when you grow up in a family business, it’s constant... Then to have that taken away, it was heart-breaking” (I.13). This is a

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<sup>78</sup> Although there are divergent ways in which failure has been conceptualised (see Jerkins and McKelvie, 2016), this section concerns itself with the individual level subjective conceptualisation of failure. The latter provides an understanding of what entrepreneurs interpret as failure; how it affects them and how they cope with failure (Jerkins and McKelvie, 2016).

plausible explanation as to why many women and media discourses refrain from sharing failing entrepreneurial experiences.<sup>79</sup> Other references to failure can be seen in Appendix F.8.

These barriers or failing experiences are overshadowed and consequently, remain under-theorised. Revealing these can shed light onto deeper structural factors that play an integral role in constructing conceptions and enactments of womanhood and entrepreneurial behaviours. As a structural “player”, the traditional Saudi media will have to bear responsibility of the false promises they disseminate through the, not-so-encompassing, positive portrayals of some Saudi female entrepreneurs’ experiences. These also lead to failed expectations, and especially that numerous new businesses fail within the first few years (Ahl, 2002). Depicting failing experiences also contend with the 2016 Saudi agenda (i.e. Vision 2030) of spurring an entrepreneurial culture and being the hub for entrepreneurship in the Middle East. As portraying these, it can overshadow SME’s contribution to the country’s GDP, which is sought to increase from 20% to 35% by 2030.<sup>80</sup>

There are studies (e.g. Al-Ghamri, 2016) investigating reasons behind failing small businesses in KSA, but in this study, the scope is to shed more light onto Saudi female’s entrepreneurial experiences as these may reveal obscured structural inequalities pertaining to some women’s experiences. As conveyed previously, the discourses of entrepreneurship in general, both in Saudi Arabia and globally, is a positive one that predominantly portray the field as a trajectory to economic growth and social empowerment. The latter is in line with assumptions made by traditional entrepreneurship discourse that construct the field as meritocratic (Ahl and Marlow, 2012 as cited in Martinez Dy, 2015) and a level playing field of opportunity. Nevertheless, traditional entrepreneurship discourse, by emphasising on success, fails to consider marginalised groups, starting their ventures, as incurring high risk of business failure results in lower economic status and a higher chance of poverty (Winn, 2005 as cited in Martinez Dy, 2015). Marginalised groups (such as Saudi women from lower economic levels who are underrepresented) are still measured against

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<sup>79</sup> It is vital to shed light onto Saudi female entrepreneurs’ perceptions on business failure, what they deem as failure and how they cope and manage their emotional responses in light of these experiences.

<sup>80</sup> See: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/338516>, (Accessed 15/10/2019).

successful entrepreneurs, deemed as more ambitious and disciplined, and hence positioned as lacking in comparison (Ahl and Marlow, 2012 as cited in Martinez Dy, 2015) The literature also fails to consider the impact of structural inequalities (Martinez Dy, 2015) such as the gendered division of work, unequal access to resources or even inequalities at the domestic level of Saudi families. The Saudi media discourses of entrepreneurship do not address for instance gender inequalities at the domestic level as these relations can be taken for granted (i.e. the woman being the primary caregiver and the man as the main provider). Some of the interviewees mostly convey barriers experienced by most entrepreneurs regardless of gender while a few believe that women incur more obstacles than men. These structural inequalities are obscured from public discourses and hence, it cannot be determined to what extent these hinder some women's entrepreneurial ventures. All in all, there are advantages, or privileges as discussed above, that determine some women's success and overall entrepreneurial engagement that are not placed into the wider structural context. Consequently, underprivileged women who potentially have entrepreneurial propensities and capabilities remain under-theorised. The prevalence of the success bias and the absence of failing narratives in the Saudi discourses of entrepreneurship is not evidence of the absence of failing experiences but is evidence of the structural privileges experienced by some women within the country that enable their entrepreneurial engagements. For now, it seems that the depiction of very specific types of Saudi (successful) women entrepreneurs does not challenge the mainstream and ubiquitous representation of the visionary heroic entrepreneur, which leaves little to the imagination for incorporating other types of female entrepreneurs who are struggling their way through structural barriers hindering their business success.

Another vital repetition is of the use of "first". The women's successes are alluded to in the three sampled magazines, and by some of the interviewees, as being the "first" in establishing a business idea or winning an award. That is, by tying it to the Arabic translation of entrepreneurs (i.e. pioneers of businesses), the deployment of "first" suggests the women's "pioneerism" or trailblazing. Therefore, the term pioneer is not only linked to the heroic archetype of entrepreneurship, but it also infers the novelty of the field, innovation or the fact that a woman is occupying the business space. When referring to novelty in entrepreneurship, it is almost inevitable to associate it with conceptions of creativity. The discourse of or the conversation about creativity,

an integral component of entrepreneurial activity, is mentioned arbitrarily and generically in the magazines and interviews.<sup>81</sup> Creativity was referred to in four ways: as associated with the creative fields or positions, as an entrepreneurial trait, as a skill, talent or sense and finally, as associated with novelty, ideation and innovation (see Appendix F.10).

The creativity or success of female entrepreneurs are measured by, usually tangible, end-results (e.g. awards, products, innovation and business ideas). Therefore, what are the implications of such representations of mostly unique, heroic, pioneering and exceptional Saudi women entrepreneurs on conceptions of creativity or indeed creative potential? The current Saudi discourses on entrepreneurship, by emphasising on being the first in a field or inventing a new product or service in KSA, recognise the end result, which is a form of *recognised creativity* (Martin, 2007). This recognition (of end-results) is a manifestation of Amabile's (1996) conception of creativity within an entrepreneurial context that highlights the generation of practical and novel ideas with regards to, for instance, products, services or work processes. Such definition, although insightful, poses great limitations upon entrepreneurship research as it attributes with significance the outcome while neglecting thinking processes and strategies, which are as valuable, that are the basis of such outcomes. That is, rather than deeming the mental processing, through which the ideas were generated, as creative, attention is afforded to the end idea that is judged in terms of its creativity<sup>82</sup>. This is evident through the identified discussion around creativity as it often neglects the processes behind generating creative ideas, products or innovations. It also does not address women's strategies to navigate their ways through the business realm. There are associations in the magazines, as seen in Appendix F.10, between creativity, thinking and ideas, but these are extremely generic as they relate to being "outside-the-box" and different. Thankfully, there is growing recognition that creativity need not be identified as requiring a product to be produced for it to exist (Martin and Wilson, 2017). Rather, creativity within the entrepreneurial realm manifests in various forms including new strategies that, for instance, enable some

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<sup>81</sup> It is lacking in the interviews because there was no explicit question addressing the conception of creativity, but the women were asked about the necessary traits that make an entrepreneur or how they saw themselves different from other women (non-entrepreneurs), and creativity was rarely alluded to.

<sup>82</sup> This line of reasoning is used in my published book chapter in *The Palgrave Handbook of Creativity* (eds. Martin and Wilson, 2018).



Saudi women entrepreneurs to navigate structural or personal barriers. As such, the conceptualisation of creativity bypasses the conventional notion of new ideas, products or services to further incorporate the creation, assessment, discovery and exploitation of business opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).

To further elucidate how the concept pioneer relates to novelty, the notion of “first” infers that this has never been achieved, won or operated by a woman in Saudi Arabia and hence, the novelty resides in occupying a new space (field or position) by a woman. It infers that it is a relatively new phenomenon, that is of a woman leading or creating, for the Saudi culture in which it has never been represented, especially in the media. The novelty also resides in the representation of the field in KSA, for example, by changing perceptions about rocket engineering as being a male dominated field (disrupting industries) and perceptions about women’s socio-economic positions within the country. The emphasis on “pioneering” or being the “firsts” can be summarised in Appendix E. This “pioneering” can pave the way for other potential Saudi women to engage in previously deemed male careers, to invent or establish new business concepts. That is, by being the pioneers of businesses, extant Saudi women entrepreneurs can create new entrepreneurial possibilities and opportunities for potential ones. This process of creating new opportunities for women and re-sculpting conceptions of industries is a form of creativity per se when drawing upon Shane and Venkataraman’s (2000) conception of creativity that entails creating business opportunities as a creative act. This process can be, ironically, recognised as *unrecognised creativity* (Martin, 2007) as it is not widely acknowledged as a creative act, especially within Saudi discourses of entrepreneurship. This recognition hence adds novelty in construing forms of creativity as encapsulated in KSA. It is also worth noting that some of the women who became the first in dominating a “male-saturated” career in KSA, such as engineering or aviation, should be recognised as women with unrecognised creative abilities, or indeed, exhibit high levels of creativity through engaging in radical changes and contributions to business sectors or the economy (Zhou, 2014) in Saudi Arabia. They surely either adopted certain strategies to navigate their way through structural and socio-cultural barriers, or simply put, without undermining any of the females’ efforts, they had strong connections given the prevalent workings of nepotism. Some female entrepreneurs in the magazines are thus represented as *pioneers* in “never-before-seen” (or mediated) positions,

accomplishments and industries that opens up business opportunities for potential female entrepreneurs, which alludes to the term's (pioneer) resonance with novelty and arguably, creativity.

With this in mind, the sampled women entrepreneurs' strategies, seen in Chapter 9, to navigate their entrepreneurial realm and certain structural barriers is considered a form of creativity as they often require women to solve everyday problems, such as the entanglement of the personal realm with the professional one. Although further details about these strategies were not highlighted during the interviews, it unveils how certain women in Saudi Arabia come up with creative strategies to navigate their context. A context that is characterised as masculine, essentialist and conventionalist, which surely requires novel ways of perceiving and enacting womanhood, especially within the business realm, in light of radical and orthodox conceptualisations of femininity that permeated Saudi culture for generations. These forms of strategies resonate with "Little-c" creativity that focuses on everyday activities, which entail "non-experts" engaging in them (Richards, Kinney, Benet, and Merzel, 1988), which underlies the significance creativity plays in everyday experiences (Richards, 2007). These women's everyday activities can be associated with Layperson's theory of creativity, which highlights, among other things, freedom and unconventionality (Sternberg, 1985). The sampled Saudi women can experience a form or a certain extent of freedom that enabled them to become entrepreneurs. These can include the freedom to use financial capital to establish a business and freedom of mobility to go out and about (which normally requires a car, or a driver, that not all Saudi women have). It also includes the time freedom that enables women to leave the domestic realm and leave its responsibilities to, usually, a housekeeper.

The current socio-cultural and economic reforms can allow, to a certain extent, a form of freedom experienced by some women in KSA to engage and express themselves in the public domain. The unconventionality, drawing upon Sternberg (1985), stems from women's inclination to participate in domains and fields that were predominantly masculine within the Saudi context, or indeed, the unconventionality that is rooted in, merely, women's socio-economic engagement. The creativity is hence encapsulated in some of the sampled women's reflexive abilities (especially with regards to the performance of their gender identities) and exploiting current information or situations

(e.g. reforms) that enable their entrepreneurial experiences. Others can argue that these women are not creative as far as privilege is concerned. My contention is, however, that creativity is a human potential and it lies in *how*, for instance, Saudi women use resources (to establish their businesses) whether inherent or acquired, discovered or created or indeed widely available or scarce.

A number of the sampled women entrepreneurs conceived entrepreneurship as a learning and growth journey and as interchangeable with motherhood as seen in Chapter 8. These conceptualisations are not only creative as to entail the specificity of women's experiences and interpretations outside conventional notions of entrepreneurship. But also, the ways in which women construct their identities and personal knowledge within the entrepreneurial realm is considered creative. It often requires them to amalgamate personal and professional settings that are generally perceived as laying in opposite ends of the spectrum, as seen in the daily lives of some of the sampled women. This enmeshment is seen in both the magazines and the interviews when women allude to their domestic roles. Indeed, the creativity immanent in the learning process is called "Mini-c" creativity, which encapsulates the personal ways in which meaningful interpretations of experiences can occur, and the dynamic interpretive process that constructs people's identities and knowledge (Beghetto and Kaufman, 2007). These experiences echo conceptions of "personal creativity" (Runco, 1996; 2004), "individual creativity" (Niu and Sternberg, 2006) and developmental notions of creativity (Beghetto and Plucker, 2006; Cohen, 1989; Sawyer et al., 2003; and Vygotsky, 2004). Not to mention that many women in Saudi Arabia lack the necessary skills and knowledge about entrepreneurship, or business in general. Therefore, the ways in which they learn to compensate for the lack of, for instance, networking abilities, knowledge, resource allocation and managerial or technical skills, is indeed a creative act as it often requires women to come up with ways or strategies to solve problems emerging from their limitations or from structural barriers. One example of adaptation or solving problems can be seen through the experience of Interviewee 4: "every time a new element in my external environment or the external environment of my business changed, I was able to change something in the business model to survive. I was able to survive so many very difficult points, like *Saudization* in 2013. Like when they closed the Skypes [Skype]." Developing an entrepreneurial identity in light of these compensations and in light of a predominantly masculine

realm, that is of entrepreneurship, is also a creative act that should be recognised as such and further made intelligible by future researches. Creativity can be further conceptualised as things that are not usually done within a business context. Given the latter, incorporating or enacting what are stereotypically deemed feminine traits such as compassion, sensitivity to others and passion, as demonstrated by some of the sampled women, is a creative act. It challenges the endemic representations of the business arena and the entrepreneur as being competitive, individualistic, aggressive and rugged. Women breastfeeding during workhours, and in front of clients, similar to the experience of interviewee 12, enables the women to perform entrepreneurship in personal and intimate ways that are not usually done in a business milieu. As such, these suggest reflexive and interpretative capabilities on womanhood and entrepreneurship grounded in the Saudi women's everyday experiences and enactment of their entrepreneurial identities. Therefore, the ways in which some women find ways to perform their personal roles or responsibilities with entrepreneurial ones are creative acts that infer creative capabilities are widely distributed (Runco and Richards, 1998; Baer and Kaufman, 2006; Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Singer, 2004). By downplaying the navigation of structural barriers, not only is the creativity that potentially exists in women overlooked, but also, entrepreneurship for females in Saudi Arabia is portrayed as seamless. It is therefore vital to provide a more nuanced understanding of both creativity and entrepreneurship as substantiated by the findings.

### **Theme Three: The Domestic Entrepreneur**

When researching male entrepreneurship, it is rarely the case that domestic issues or responsibilities are mentioned. The latter cannot be suggested when discussing female entrepreneurs and in particular women in Saudi Arabia.<sup>83</sup> This study, it must be admitted, falls into this trap by asking women, through the interviews, about their domestic responsibilities affecting their entrepreneurial ones<sup>84</sup>, which indicates as to how women's private and public realms are inextricably enmeshed. This amalgamation is also evidenced by some of the women who asserted that both realms cannot be separated. Women are said to have made a "lifestyle" choice by combining the domestic and professional realm, and that they choose entrepreneurship to enable them to have flexible work hours and more time to care for the children. As such,

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<sup>83</sup> This resonates with Ahl's (2002) assertion that research on female entrepreneurs focuses on their lives as not merely encompassing work, but also the domestic realm including the family and kids.

<sup>84</sup> I cannot simply ignore that the domestic realm is indeed mostly ascribed to Saudi women.

female entrepreneurship is perceived as the “flexible resource that makes the work-family equation add up” (Ahl, 2002 p.165). The latter conjecture can be tied to the above notion of privilege that enables Saudi women’s entrepreneurial activity; that is, by virtue of these privileges, women are not categorised as *necessity entrepreneurs*. Rather, they can be deemed *opportunity entrepreneurs* who find engaging in an entrepreneurial endeavour more flexible to suit their lifestyles and pursue their passions. In other words, entrepreneurship can be a lifestyle per se or a mechanism through which women attain their aspired lifestyles. These all suggest aspirational and positive aspects of the field, but surely there are obscured factors that have vital implications upon the women’s businesses.

These findings are not surprising since seemingly, most Saudi women contribute more in household chores and childcare compared to men (despite gradual shifts in gender relations within KSA). Therefore, how does this gendered division of labour affect Saudi women’s recognition and seizing of entrepreneurial opportunities? Such a question is prompted by the Marxist feminist tradition that aims to theorise women’s unpaid labour within a capitalist system. In other words, it aims to elucidate the impact that women’s domestic labour has on their labour market participation and hence designating them with a disadvantaged economic position as compared to men (Greer and Greene, 2003). Marxist feminists also believe that if the inequalities within the economic system are eliminated, then so can the social inequalities that arise from gender and ethnic relations, for instance. This is a very radical step for a “young” country such as Saudi Arabia in which gender relations dictated much of the country’s internal politics. As long as women’s unpaid labour in KSA is not recognised as a contributing factor to the capitalist system and as long as gender-role stereotypes permeate Saudi educational and media discourses, Saudi women will still remain subordinated within both the paid labour market and unpaid domestic realm. In light of such existing concerns, Greer and Greene (2003) call for the socialisation of housework and childcare in addition to paying wages to homemakers. Echoing Greer and Greene’s enquiries, speculations around entrepreneurship as a trajectory to women’s emancipation and a meritocratic level playing field still remain the concern of this study as the findings of both the interviews and CDA suggest otherwise. In that, despite Saudi women’s inclinations to participate in the economic realm and engage in entrepreneurial ventures, the patriarchal capitalist nexus is perpetuated and reproduced by women taking over the majority of the household work and childcare

while simultaneously juggling work responsibilities. These structural gender inequalities in KSA, and within the privacy of homes, can explicate the existence of gender inequalities in entrepreneurship participation. In a sense, these structural barriers militate against some Saudi women's economic contribution and more specifically, entrepreneurial opportunity recognition. Table 12 below provides examples of the current theme.

References to Domesticity	Quotation	Source
<b>Motherhood and Domesticity</b>	<b>“How do you strike a healthy balance between work and family?</b> I have come to realise that perfecting a balance is unattainable. There are days where I am more present as a mother and there are days where I am more present at my workspace. I take each day as it comes without self-judgement and I try and be a better person.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	<b>“You have Shoes and Drama, Niche Arabia, and you got married recently...How do you juggle it all?</b> I have an amazing team! My people in Jeddah, Dubai and Milan all work together to allow me to have some semblance of a real life! And I have to mention my current support system: @MrShoesanddrama, aka my husband (He's going to kill me for calling him that!) But he is why this is possible... my work is just as important as the role of “mom” or “wife.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	<b>“It's important that I'm aware, I'm connected to the kids, to the house, and I think this is the first experience with entrepreneurship.”</b> <b>“Managing kids. Managing my own life and my work and the car and my friends. We call it multiple screens in leadership.”</b>	Interviewee 10 (I.10)

Table 12: References to Motherhood/Domesticity

### 10.5. What is Excluded from the Discourses? (Discursive Exclusions)

Drawing upon Foucault's *reversal* principle, this section addresses what is excluded from the discourses of female entrepreneurship by considering the above constructs. Notably, it explicates the obscured, neglected or omitted in light of the present underlying assumptions within each theme. Some points can be inextricably amalgamated, which can showcase the interwoven structural elements that have an impact upon female's entrepreneurial endeavours. As delineated previously, there are no references to underprivileged women in the entrepreneurial realm, rare mentions of

failing experiences, and the impediments that women incur from the magazines' perspectives. These set out a scene of a very positive business venture that is expected to, and in many cases does bring about success and enhanced living standards, economic growth and national and global recognition while obscuring universal socio-economic and environmental ramifications associated with capitalist processes. These can include natural resource depletion, inequality of wealth distribution or an increased social class divide, exploitation of human labour and psychological distress attributed to increased competition.

Another muted "voice" is that of the reasons for embarking on an entrepreneurial venture in the first place.<sup>86</sup> The high rate of Saudi female unemployment should also be acknowledged as a pivotal factor for women to look for work through entrepreneurship. The unequal distribution of unpaid work, such as childcare and domestic chores, is highly likely to impede women's paid labour by working less or working longer hours combining the two paid and unpaid labour, which consequently encourages women to pursue flexible work such as self-employment. The public-private dichotomy and the ways in which a line is drawn that implies a gendered division of labour positions women entrepreneurs in a secondary position by attributing caretaking onuses as primary to women's roles (Ahl, 2002). Men dominate the public realm in which familial responsibilities do not interfere with "rational" planning (Ahl, 2002). Having to carry the load of both the domestic and professional realms means that women cannot adhere to the business needs similar to their male counterparts, who are not subject to similar expectations (Ahl, 2002). These are seldom mentioned in the media discourses as possible determinants that encourage women's gravitation towards entrepreneurship.<sup>87</sup> That is, while the Saudi media celebrates women's economic engagement and breaking obsolete gender barriers, it leaves the unpaid domestic labour dilemma undiscussed.

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<sup>86</sup> There are "push" factors that lead women towards self-employment in Saudi Arabia; namely: dissatisfaction with a previous employer, work environment, inflexible work-hours, insufficient salary or even the type of work.

<sup>87</sup> These positive and unquestioned constructions operate to omit critical perspectives on entrepreneurship; and these can promote entrepreneurship through a political agenda by promoting neo-liberal market ideologies while obscuring, for instance, a dismantling welfare system (Ahl, 2002).

This can mean that these expectations with regards to women's domestic work are tied to essentialist notions of womanhood and hence left unchallenged. Further, the permeation of an egalitarian discourse through the Saudi entrepreneurship discourses dims the light on gender power relations amongst family dynamics embedded within the domestic realm, which, as I contended previously, play a vital role in hindering women's socio-economic engagements. Power relations between men and women and issues of women subordination remain unquestioned by most authors of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2002); mirroring this study's finding. At least the loosening of the male guardianship law is now one initiative that seems to address the inequalities present in the privacy of homes. Another vital neglected and taken for granted "enabler", to women's entrepreneurial engagements, is the fact that capable and privileged women in KSA can hire housekeepers, predominantly women, to attend to the household chores, which can decrease the heavy burden of looking after the housework and the children on working women. The below figure draws upon the created themes above to consider what has been excluded from the discourses:

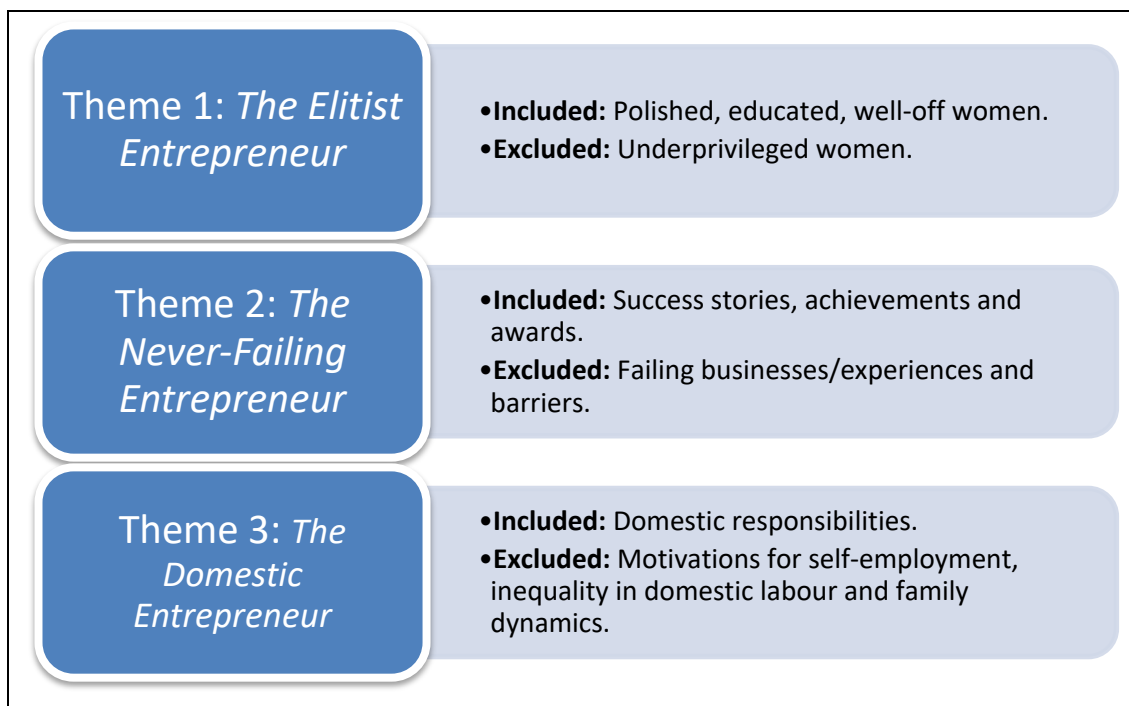


Figure 10: What is Excluded from the Discourses? "Discursive Exclusions" (Created by the author)



## **10.6. Conclusion**

This chapter set out to explain how female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia is imbued with paradoxes that in turn render it as challenging to categorise within extant conceptualisations. What is clear however, is that it might be entrepreneurship that shines a light on inequality and in some respect, dims the light on feminism. In that, it seems that the discourses, the factors revolving around the field and the women entrepreneurs' experiences construct it as elitist, positive, seamless, and paradoxically, unique, and similar to ubiquitous representations of the entrepreneur or entrepreneurship in general. The next chapter outlines the thesis conclusion highlighting theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of female entrepreneurship and discusses the findings' implications on Saudi policy.

## **Chapter 11: Conclusion – The Social Construction of Saudi Female Entrepreneurship: From Media to Experiences**

### **11.1. Introduction**

This thesis argues for the theoretical expansion of entrepreneurship theory and practice through shedding light on Saudi women's entrepreneurial experiences and media representations of Saudi women entrepreneurs in a conventional yet reforming context that is of KSA. It undertakes a deep and sustained discursive analysis of the sampled magazines and interview narratives through which it identifies the ways in which entrepreneurship has been socially in Saudi Arabia. Although magazines may be deemed as trivial and insignificant for entrepreneurship literature, they still circulate and continue to forge a strong entrepreneurial identity to favourably shape public opinion. The interviews were also important as they were gauged against the analysed media representations to identify the differences between the mediated entrepreneurial "reality" and the Saudi women's actual entrepreneurial experiences. I was able to unveil the divergent structural, personal and discursive influences upon the social construction of entrepreneurship in KSA and highlight how Saudi entrepreneurship discourses (the study sample) simultaneously perpetuate and divert away from ubiquitous Western conceptualisations of the field. I find that there are common and opposing entrepreneurship discourses between Western and Saudi conceptions, and the most prevalent is the discursive construction of entrepreneurship as elitist in Saudi Arabian discourses.

### **11.2. Empirical Contribution – The Counternarratives of Entrepreneurship**

Most of the early literature on entrepreneurship, as seen in Chapter 3, stresses the mythic heroic (although Western male) figure that is of the entrepreneur, which is observed in this study's sample by inferring women entrepreneurs are unique, exceptional people and in some instances, as seen in the interviews, as innately entrepreneurial. As Atherton (2004) averred, the representations of entrepreneurship tend to be caricatured, then the enterprise rhetoric privileges entrepreneurs as the archetypes of Schumpeter's creative destruction. This ubiquitous representation and

assumptions are however contested (e.g. Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Marlow and McAdam, 2013; and Jones and Spicer, 2009). There is then a common narrative between both Saudi and Western discourses of entrepreneurship. They also stress the individualism embedded in the heroic figure while predominately disregarding the macro-level or contextual factors (e.g. political, socio-cultural, socio-economic, cultural imperialist, national culture) that contribute in constructing an entrepreneurial identity and venture. This is also striking as Saudi Arabia is a collectivist nation that tends to hold value systems that prioritise the wellbeing of society and the community over the individual. Gravitating away from the culture of collectivism through entrepreneurship discourses, it suggests that it is because of the self-reliant, confident, autonomous and successful individual entrepreneur that the Saudi economy is booming. This common rhetoric of the aspirational and individualistic hero entrepreneur is problematic as it disregards entrepreneurship as a process and people who can learn and obtain the necessary skills and knowledge to become entrepreneurs. It can also keep individuals beholden to their socio-economic positions. This cultural and media glorification of entrepreneurs then tends to put certain people, as role models, on a pedestal similar to how very specific types of women are represented in the sampled magazines.

Another common narrative between Western and Saudi discourses on entrepreneurship is the overarching positivity and success bias promoted around the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial activity in engendering wealth, novelty, achievement and economic development, which in turn endows entrepreneurs this heroic representation. Therefore, the entrepreneur becomes “an exciting collective identity for the individual to aspire to become” (Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003). The positive media depictions, then, of Saudi female entrepreneurs do not merely reflect their practices, but also shape public perception about the favourability of the field and consequently projected upon the country’s changing policies. The media hence creates attitudes as well as makes visible potential (entrepreneur) role models (Ljunggren and Alsos, 2001). The individualism embedded in such portrayals is problematic as the entrepreneurial process is not devoid of the entrepreneur’s relationship with the social structure and its meaning, beliefs and values; rather this relationship is immanent in the entrepreneurial process (Drakopoulou-Dodd and Anderson, 2007; Jack and Anderson, 2002). As such, methodological individualism, through which explanatory

power is attributed to the individual “agential” entrepreneur while undermining the effects of structure (Elster, 1989) is alluded to, as well as avoiding the prioritising of structure and the over-socialisation of the entrepreneur (Granovetter, 1989).

The counternarratives derived from this study’s findings that deviate from and challenge the quintessential entrepreneurship discourses in Western literature, are of value to the academic conversation as they shed light on the multiplicity and varied “nature” of the entrepreneurial actions as well as their actors. The most prevalent counternarrative in the Saudi entrepreneurship discourses, of this study’s sample, is the construction of entrepreneurship as elitist and entrepreneurs as the elite of Saudi economy. This is in contention with the Western rags-to-riches discourse that narrate the “journey” of, usually a man, accumulating and deploying resources to achieve wealth. The findings unveil that the Saudi women had varying degrees of available resources that enabled their entrepreneurial endeavours. That is, these women were opportunity entrepreneurs and used their current resources to endow them with new value. In a sense, since there is lack of necessity (economically speaking) entrepreneurs, the Saudi discourses reveal a “riches-to-riches” discourse. There is thus a tendency for the privileged to be more likely entrepreneurs.<sup>88</sup> Since the prevalent rhetoric is concerned with privileges, it implies the lack of struggles or indeed highlights the “seamlessness” embedded within the women’s attempts in establishing their businesses. This is not to infer that there are no barriers, but to state that they are highly underplayed especially in the sampled magazines. This is counter to the struggles found in or ascribed with the rags-to-riches discourses and consequently, failing entrepreneurial experiences are also overshadowed by a positive aspirational rhetoric. Such oversimplification and the depiction of an idealistic utopian scenario in the Saudi discourses can suggest that these messages in the magazines are tailored towards the youth who the State is providing countless initiatives to support their engagement in the labour market and especially in entrepreneurship. This correlates to Martinez Dy’s (2015) assertion that groups, such as policymakers and business development organisations, that aim to drive economic development and wish to encourage business formation, often use positive conceptualisations (or depiction of

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<sup>88</sup> See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2017/feb/20/rags-riches-privileged-entrepreneurs-business-resilience-michelle-mone>, (Accessed 20/04/2020).

entrepreneurship) to encourage underemployed people to establish businesses. As such, another narrative proliferated in the Saudi magazines, is the emphasis on youth and young Saudi entrepreneurs as the catalysts of economic disruption and creative destruction, in Schumpeterian terms. This is a counternarrative as traditional Western conceptualisations of entrepreneurship do not stress the age or “youthfulness” of the entrepreneur. The focus, on a micro-level, is rather on the rational actor who brings about economic change through novelty, innovation and invention.

Another vital counternarrative is moving beyond the conventional Western male entrepreneur and highlighting in many instances, the feminised aspects of entrepreneurship. The feminisation per se suggests the norm is male yet it also celebrates the uniqueness that Saudi women, or women in general, bring about in their entrepreneurial ventures. It is in contention with Western discourses that valorise the male figure, evidently by first making women the centre of attention, but it echoes Western literature in that whenever a female is the subject in the entrepreneurship field, motherhood and domesticity are always alluded to. My findings also reveal the sacrifice and juggling incorporated in being a female entrepreneur. Further, there is a national perspective attached to the field, which renders it as specific to Saudi Arabia. With a move towards a “moderate” Islamic implementation, as pointed by Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, there is a tension between religious and secular discourses of entrepreneurship.

### **11.3. Theoretical Contribution – Entrepreneurship in KSA: A Conduit of Power**

There are ubiquitous representations of the power of entrepreneurship, or the power of being an entrepreneur, in, for instance, shaping societies, transforming economies and creating ground-breaking technologies. There is no explicit reference to entrepreneurship as a conduit of power, or indeed *as* power. Through this study’s analysis, entrepreneurship, in my contention, is an “apparatus” by which the country is putting into effect its political, socio-cultural, gender relations and economic agenda. It is through the representation of entrepreneurship that ideologies, such as patriarchy and capitalism, are either maintained or challenged. It is through the promotion and celebration of female entrepreneurship, which depicts changes in policies, that the country is ameliorating its misogynist international image and, yet, it is also through

entrepreneurship that the class system and elitism is maintained. Thus, there is a nuanced argument of freedoms and restraints, privilege and social mobility.

The promotion of entrepreneurship through the liberalising efforts also works towards sustaining a capitalist system that provides a certain economic freedom but requires citizens to predominantly produce. The latter can be perceived as a form of power to control citizens' work and thus contribute to the country by praising and rewarding those who generate economic wealth (such as entrepreneurs) as seen through this study's findings (the celebration of successful Saudi women entrepreneurs in magazines). Through the reproduction of a capitalist system via entrepreneurship discourses, it partially decentralises economic power to those who own means of production, but also, through it that the State's power is exerted and reinforced through governing economic relationships. The institutional and political framework through which the Saudi market operates and is embedded and regulated infers this governmental intervention. The specificity of the representations of certain female entrepreneurs, who are usually successful, well-educated, polished and many of whom belong to renowned business families, while marginalising in terms of representing the economically, socially and culturally disadvantaged, renders entrepreneurship as a mechanism through which the privileged remain privileged. The discourses and representations of a specific entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia is in my opinion a discursive strategy per se that constructs what entrepreneurship and who an entrepreneur is, and therefore, who is economically valuable. The power thus resides in the selection process of successful and (financially, socially and culturally) well-off entrepreneurs to construct entrepreneurship in KSA. As such, entrepreneurship as a discourse and practice in Saudi Arabia has power to maintain an elitist social structure within the country, which is further discussed below.

Capitalism is normally condemned for its association with, or even causation and exacerbation of, the social class divide. That is, it is ubiquitously argued that it makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Echoing these claims are this study's findings in terms of reinforcing an elitist discourse and system through entrepreneurship. Usually resonating with capitalism is patriarchy that is observed in this study to be, possibly inadvertently, reproduced through associating women with essentialist conceptions and enactments of womanhood. Not only do the sampled women hold essentialist

tenets about womanhood and their identities, but also the Saudi traditional media, such as the sampled magazines, tend to perpetuate essentialist stereotypes about women and their roles. Any media, either governmentally or privately owned, content in KSA and its dissemination abide by information laws that dictate what programs, information and types of individuals are mediated. The prevalence of women's associations with essentialist motherly and caregiving roles in various institutional discourses, such as business magazines and programs, suggests that these conventional ideologies are still widely accepted on a societal and even political level. Alluding to motherhood roles as inextricably enmeshed with entrepreneurial ones in the magazines as acceptable and inevitable reinforces patriarchal notions of women's subordination in the economic realm as well as the domestic arena, as women very often have to incur personal and professional barriers and have to simultaneously juggle aspects from both realms. What is striking is that these are portrayed as acceptable, natural and even socially expected. There is power behind these media messages through subjugating and entitling women to certain forms of identities and roles that sometimes are challenging to perform, especially for those in marginalised positions with lack of financial aid to support their dual, if not multiple, roles. Women in KSA are expected to preserve their families and homes, take care of the children and maintain their "decency", and are expected to equally excel in their academic and professional endeavours; all of these expectations cannot be said to apply onto Saudi men whose main (cultural) roles is to protect and provide for their families through work. These representations, imbued with gendered assumptions and expectations, have power in themselves to construct and reinforce gender relations and thus have a powerful effect in terms of the existing socio-cultural and socio-economic inequalities, not to mention political ones. On a positive note, and paradoxically, these discourses of women's economic and socio-cultural engagement, in addition to policy changes, also have power to dismantle patriarchal structures and essentialist notions of womanhood and femininity and hence reshaping perceptions of these. In either case, through these representations that the Saudi culture is either maintained or transformed in light of existing or new values.

Saudi values underpin a Saudi nationalist discourse that are embedded within the entrepreneurship discourses. The prevalent use of "Saudi" as defining the field or the women's identities suggest a strong affiliation to the country or indeed the Al-Sa'ud

Royal Family. When one reflects upon such a country name “Saudi Arabia”, it is rarely alluded to that we *belong* to the ruling family. The ruling family has absolute power over its citizens by virtue of the country’s name. Therefore, ascribing entrepreneurship with a Saudi nationalist agenda is a reminder that whomever pursues such a field is governed, and arguably constrained, by Saudi laws and values constructing and constraining entrepreneurial behaviour. All in all, the representation of entrepreneurship hence contributes in sustaining and reshaping ideologies, gender and power relations, social structures and economic systems, as well as constructing the conception and practice of entrepreneurship within a Saudi milieu.

#### **11.4. Implications for the Literature and Future Research**

Social constructionism enabled clarification of the ways in which Saudi female entrepreneurs construct their everyday entrepreneurial experiences with elements supplied by social relationships and expectations, as suggested by Fletcher (2006). That is, the foci are not merely on the Saudi women’s personal, cognitive or perceptual processes with regards to identifying entrepreneurship, but equal emphasis given to the ways in which socio-cultural practices in Saudi Arabia shape the conception and enactment of entrepreneurship. The construction of entrepreneurship was examined through the relationship between the women’s own sense-making processes of entrepreneurship and the structural elements influencing this, and more specifically, the discursive processes in Saudi media portrayals of female entrepreneurs. The latter resonates with some research concerns with the relationality between individuals (e.g. Saudi women entrepreneurs) and their contexts/texts (e.g. Saudi milieu/Saudi media) (Bouwen and Steyaert, 1990; Dachler et al., 1995; Bouwen, 2001 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.427), which consequently highlight the *relational constructionism* approach (Fletcher, 2006). By adopting the latter approach to this study, I have positioned Saudi women entrepreneurs as “relational beings” who engage in acts of becoming entrepreneurs with relations to past and future interactions (e.g. socio-cultural discourses on womanhood and entrepreneurship) as they forge new understandings and opportunities. Drawing upon Gergen’s argument (1999 p.49 cited in Fletcher, 2006 p.423), the Saudi female entrepreneurs can be perceived as reflecting upon particular forms of understanding womanhood and entrepreneurship in a context of cultural change. In doing so, they are not merely fashioning their past and future, but



are also reinforcing certain conceptualisations and enactment of both womanhood and entrepreneurship that enables certain socio-cultural conventions to remain sensible, or even permissible, to both themselves and society.

The study makes cogent the nexus between female entrepreneurs as human agents and social forces, and their roles they *can* play in reinforcing or reproducing the social structure (norms, institutions, tradition and so on). Therefore, they forge entrepreneurship through the ways in which they conceive and perform their entrepreneurial identities. That is, by emphasising the relatedness aspect mentioned above, it can be argued that the meaning of womanhood and entrepreneurship that resides in the sampled women's minds, is made intelligible through relating them to the structures in which they are embedded. Even though the conceptions of entrepreneurship or womanhood are perceived by many as existing objectively prior to one's knowledge, they are on the contrary constructed through the interactions and interpretations of the women within their Saudi society. The latter resonates with the constructionist view that indicates institutions, social actions and the conditions that are deemed as objective, are constructed through social interactions (Berger and Luckmann, 1966 cited in Alvarez et al., 2010 p.26). In a sense, Saudi women are amalgamating a Saudi Arabian religious past with the new slightly more secular and liberalising Vision 2030 future.

Reflecting on the above word "becoming" and the standards of the entrepreneurship literature, I faced the problem throughout the thesis of identifying the women and asked: are these Saudi women "actually" entrepreneurs? The first issue is, the conventional understandings on entrepreneurship are very masculine, and thus, these Saudi women cannot be entrepreneurs as they are not engaged in "masculine" activities and trade, and yet, they identify as entrepreneurs. The second issue is that entrepreneurs in the conventional Western literature cannot come from privileged backgrounds and have to embody the traditional "rags-to-riches" discourse to become a pioneer, yet, these Saudi women, who have varying extents and types of privileges are identified as entrepreneurs. It is thus difficult to argue that these women in Saudi Arabia are entrepreneurs in light of the literature. However, what I can claim is that they are in the process of becoming entrepreneurs as when we think of identity formation, it is not constructing an actual identity per se, but it is the process of

becoming that identity similar to how entrepreneurship, arguably, is a process rather than a fixed act. What is more important is to explore whether it is actually possible being an entrepreneur in KSA in light of the endemic understandings.

Not only the above, but the juxtapositions imbued in the Saudi discourses render it difficult to identify entrepreneurship in light of the Western literature. Some of the ways in which entrepreneurship is represented by the Saudi traditional media (such as magazines) and women's own entrepreneurial engagement suggest a division of labour<sup>89</sup>; in that, the media is perpetuating a gendered form of entrepreneurship when portraying the entrepreneurs as strong-willed, energetic, self-centred and in some instances detached from domestic life such as taking care of the children, which can be mostly reserved to the female member of the Saudi family. Paradoxically, by also attributing caregiving roles and domestic chores to female entrepreneurs only, it reinforces the male-centric norm of entrepreneurship, in which an actual role is taken up outside the home, not a process of entangling the self, the home and business. Although women entrepreneurs are being increasingly featured in Saudi media, they are either implicitly detached from, or associated with, the typified male entrepreneur by first highlighting motherly roles as tied to women's entrepreneurial identities and second, by obscuring real domestic experiences influencing entrepreneurial endeavours.

By also analysing what is not mentioned by the women, either in the magazines or in the interviews, entrepreneurship is conversely constructed as not gendered at all. The latter may suggest that it is a role that can be inhabited by anyone even someone from unprivileged backgrounds. Most of the women do not state or allude to gender-specific policies that can impact their ventures. The more established women participants from earlier generations alluded to social and legislative gendered barriers that impacted some aspects of their businesses. Despite this implicit attempt to construct entrepreneurship as agender, it can be argued that it is indeed so as first, it ascribes women entrepreneurs

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<sup>89</sup> It is estimated that unpaid work done by women amounts to approximately \$10 trillion (£ 8.1 trillion) of output per year, which is equivalent to 13 percent of global GDP. See: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/people/gender-equality/women-s-economic-empowerment/unpaid-care.html>, (Accessed: 12/09/2019). In Saudi Arabia, exact estimations cannot be stated on women's unpaid labour given the prevalence of foreign housekeepers, which is a form of privilege facilitating women's economic participation.

with specific domestic roles, which is different from male entrepreneurs' experiences. Secondly and conversely, it detaches women from these roles that can be deemed predominantly associated with Saudi women, and hence constructing women in some discourses as similar to the mainstream male entrepreneur. That is, all the constructions in this study's samples lead to the deduction of entrepreneurship in KSA as gendered and hence the use of "female entrepreneurs". This deduction resonates with Ahl's (2002) study in which she argues that the discourse on women, in economic and management literature, is found to be in opposition with the discourse on entrepreneurship (in general). As such, a woman who is also an entrepreneur has to simultaneously position herself with regards to two opposing discourses. Ahl (2002) reported that women are depicted as doing the opposite (of "male" entrepreneurship) or are said to have made a "life-style" choice. This can be extrapolated to the current study in the sense that none of the analysed female entrepreneurs were *necessity entrepreneurs* and thus embarking upon an entrepreneurial venture can be deemed a life-style choice that suits their achievement and autonomy aspiration. It also matches the current socio-economic reforms that enable many females in Saudi Arabia to jump on the entrepreneurial "bandwagon". This study does not resonate with Ahl's (2002) conclusion that the feminine (or feminine connotations) in entrepreneurship research is found to be associated with weakness or "lacking". The Saudi female entrepreneurs in this study's samples were, in contrary, positioned as extraordinary, successful, brilliant and so on. However, this study finds relevance in Ahl's assertions that female entrepreneurs are represented as *exceptions* in comparison to "regular" women and others were positioned as *motherly* entrepreneurs who constituted "upgraded" female traits.

It should also be acknowledged that some Saudi female entrepreneurs are being socially constructed by the respective study, as it functions as a discourse through which these women are represented. The thesis unveils certain experiences and conceptions expressed by the participants and by focusing upon a limited type of discourses that is of the Saudi magazines. As well as contrasting representation with experience, gender was the main factor being discussed in this construction since the study revolves around women's experiences, but there are evidently other variables such as ethnicity, social class, age, cultural background and so on, that need to be considered. Mirchandani (1999) asserted that it is crucial to simultaneously document

gender divergences while acknowledging other types of differences amongst entrepreneurs. Examining the link between female entrepreneurship, social stratification, organisational structure and business focus is crucial not only for obtaining insights on the experiences of women business-owners, but also for understanding the notion of entrepreneurship itself (Mirchandani, 1999). Such suggestions should be considered in similar future studies such as Martinez Dy's (2015) intersectional approach to researching female entrepreneurs in the UK.

This thesis also recognised the media's role in reflecting the changing policies in Saudi Arabia that are boosting the country's economy and especially altering gender relations, at least ostensibly. The women's driving ban lift has had a tremendous liberalisation effect upon women, not only personally and economically, but also socially as now they are able to showcase that they are autonomous and are not reliant on their male guardians to do basic tasks, such as running errands. Women in KSA are now given the opportunity to further demonstrate their capabilities due to decreased structural barriers one of which is lifting the policy that obligates women to obtain approvals from their male guardians to open businesses or even work. The Saudi media, by setting the agenda, conveys the extant institutional powers, such as media organisations governed by State policies, that have power to determine what news are considered significant and which individuals need to be highlighted. The discourse of women emancipation can be valid in light of the extant reforms and the prominent "metamorphosis" of women's positionality in the country, but simultaneously, it is obscuring other pivotal discourses. Hence, this rising liberalism discourse seemingly only concerns itself with the economic and socio-cultural arena as conveyed through Vision 2030. Overall, this thesis addressed the gaps in the entrepreneurship literature in the social construction of entrepreneurship by examining the representation and narratives of women's entrepreneurial participation within a conventional and traditionalist context that is Saudi Arabia. The thesis's findings disrupt the conventional representation of the Western male entrepreneur by shedding light onto how Saudi women's personal experiences impact their entrepreneurial endeavours. Not only personal accounts, but also the thesis examined the structural elements forging these entrepreneurial experiences. One currently pertinent structural element that needs further attention is Vision 2030 and the ways in which it resonates with the current study's findings. Below is the macro level of the Critical Discourse Analysis.

### **11.5. Vision 2030 and Saudi Female Entrepreneurship**

Saudi Arabia is witnessing unprecedented economic and social reforms through the implementation of Vision 2030 and during the research and writing of my thesis it has become the focal point in current Saudi discourses. The more notable reform, and of interest to this study, concerns women's socio-economic positions within KSA, which saw an increase in their labour force participation. With this in mind, it is worthy to measure this study's findings against Vision 2030's main initiatives and programmes to examine whether the Saudi entrepreneurial discourses are in line with the vision's agenda. It is also significant to establish whether these reforms truly help in emancipating and ameliorating Saudi women's socio-economic positions. This is vital as it further substantiates that these entrepreneurial discourses are indeed conduits of power to help in achieving the State's initiatives.

#### ***Vision 2030 and Entrepreneurship***

Overall, the exponential exposure of Saudi businesswomen and female entrepreneurs in the media is a manifestation of the significance of SMEs and their notable contribution to the country's GDP. Not only the latter, but also, it sheds light on the State's agenda and efforts to support entrepreneurs in creating job opportunities, however, the representation of the very few, as showcased throughout this study, renders this support as exclusive. The latter is not a very fair deduction given the State's initiatives to enhance access to funding in addition to encouraging banks and financial institutions to support start-ups. The overall findings of the respective study, both in the magazines sample and interviews, do not emphasise on governmental financial aids for the women's businesses and instead, focus on, relatively, financially and socio-culturally well-off entrepreneurs. Therefore, it can lead to speculating that these State efforts are either negligible or women are in no need for such financial loans.

There should be a more transparent account as to who the women entrepreneurs are in need for such finances and how they utilise them in their businesses. Such access to data can enable better assessment by the government and financial institutions, and even researchers, of how such resources are to be allocated and utilised. There are more Saudis obtaining loans to establish their businesses thanks to the recent Vision

2030's agenda, but since there is a lack of mention by the women or lack of representation (from this study's sample) of these accounts, I can only stress the construction of Saudi female entrepreneurs as privileged and thus female entrepreneurship as elitist. This goes against dominant (most likely Western) conceptions that anyone, regardless of age, class, ethnicity or gender, can become an entrepreneur. Constructing a Saudi elitist entrepreneurship discourse can thus become political. Entrepreneurship can be one factor of political improvement, or even destruction, but when I say political I allude to the identity politics embedded within such construction. Again, the Vision's agenda states that its initiatives, and especially that of economic concerns, are tailored towards "everyone" within the country. However, the sampled interviewees and more specifically the sampled magazines suggest that only particular groups within the country can become entrepreneurs and hence the discussion around identity politics. Should the agenda further ameliorate the economic conditions of certain groups (i.e. the elitist and the privileged), it can certainly exacerbate and deepen the social or class divide and inequalities within KSA. As long as there is marginalisation (especially regarding representation) of groups from lower economic levels within Saudi entrepreneurial discourses, the issue then becomes a political one.

Again, it would not be fair to assume that this is the objective of the agenda, that is to exacerbate the social divide, but certainly the privileged can benefit from an enhanced economy, not to mention more business opportunities and investments due to their presence in media discourses. In that, more media presence can mean higher chances of being recognised and thus increased business opportunities. Therefore, there is an indirect and tacit relationship between Vision 2030's economic agenda and the sampled media portrayals of entrepreneurs in that the potential economic gains from the State's blueprint can ameliorate the economic conditions of the already privileged, that is, those who are represented in this study's sample. This is not to state that other members of society do not benefit from such reforms, but to suggest that the agenda brings with it a reinforcement of a capitalist structure through which the privileged (i.e. the represented) can have more economic gains and hence leading to an increase in the social divide.

### ***Vision 2030, Equality and the Entrepreneurial Gender Gap***

The Vision's agenda encourages and promotes an equality discourse by explicitly stating "providing equal opportunities" within its website. It aims at providing economic opportunities, training, education and finances for both men and women equally. Although the Vision stresses on equality, it focuses more, in some of its messages, on women as an economic potential and an untapped asset. The question is, however, how can there be an equality discourse whilst there still remain conventional notions revolving around women's roles and identities? And how can the inequality in perceiving both womanhood and manhood be translated into equal socio-cultural, economic and even political opportunities? Given the socio-cultural divide in terms of gender roles, Saudi women remain economically underprivileged compared to Saudi men due to the domestic and child rearing responsibilities ascribed to women. That is, Saudi women tend to have less job and entrepreneurial opportunities, and this is evidenced in the provided labour market participation statistics (see Appendix A 3.2). Therefore, the agenda should not merely focus on the talent or business competencies that women lack, but also, attention should be afforded to the gender ascriptions and domestic division of labour that can be detrimental to their economic contribution, which can explicate the gender entrepreneurial gap within Saudi Arabia. That is, the gap may exist not due to gender differences with regards to entrepreneurial competencies or merit, but due to socio-cultural ascriptions with regards to Saudi women's socio-economic positions.

The sampled Saudi women entrepreneurs revealed the need for achievement and independence, which are not specific to men entrepreneurs in general but rather a common similarity between both groups (Humphreys and McClung, 1981; Pellegrino and Reece, 1982; Schwartz, 1976 cited in Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991 p.141). Nevertheless, society functions as one of the main hinderances towards Saudi women's economic engagement. One reason that eludes women from innovative products and services is the social disapproval women incur when they divert away from gender-normative, socially accepted and conformist patterns of behaviour, which "boys" normally receive encouragement for, that is to engage in innovative and nonconformist "play" (Papalia and Olds, 1981 cited in Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991 p.142). The latter can be extrapolated to this study since various women cite social expectations with respect to women's conducts as barriers. Further, Caliendo et al.

(2014) posit that the gender gap in entrepreneurship can be attributed to numerous elements one of which is education. The authors speculated that highly educated people are more likely to choose self-employment while less educated individuals have a lower propensity to engage in entrepreneurial ventures. This speculation is not evident in Saudi Arabia where women are more educated than men, yet their entrepreneurial participation remains relatively lower than their male counterparts. As such, and with considering the governmental initiatives set to encourage further economic and entrepreneurial participation by both Saudi men and women, the gender gap in entrepreneurship can be highly explained or attributed to socio-cultural factors. They are hence not psychological or personal traits implicated with or inferred by the stereotypical depictions of the male-centric entrepreneur that may hinder women. In turn, Saudi females' low entrepreneurial engagement, despite a rapid increase in the last few years, can contribute in constructing entrepreneurship as male-normative in Saudi Arabia.

### ***Vision 2030 and the Valorisation of the Family and Religious Institutions***

Embedded within its messages, Vision 2030 recognises the significance of the family as the foundation of a “vibrant society”. The discourse on the significance of the family is also prevalent in this study's findings and is especially manifest through most of the women's narratives that convey an attempt for a work-life balance to adhere to their familial obligations. The valorisation of the family is also present in some of the sampled magazines' articles that ask the interviewed women entrepreneurs on how they manage to care for their families as businesswomen. Extending the importance of the family is the Vision's emphasis on family unity by rendering it as one of the main values that characterises the country. Not only the latter but also the adherence to moderate Islamic principles and national pride are also deemed essential building blocks for a vibrant society in KSA. Religion is an inevitable constituent of many of Saudi's daily lives. That is, by listening or reading the sampled women's narratives, it goes without saying that religion or God is a vital aspect or even a factor in the success of their businesses. The promotion of a moderate Islamic value can be observed through the sampled magazines in which several Saudi women are portrayed without the cultural attire that is of the Abaya (i.e. black robe) and even without head scarfs (although this is not recent, but it is becoming more prevalent). Until recently, women's faces were banned on billboard advertisements. The gradual widespread of



women's faces in magazines and outdoor advertisements is an indication to the loosening policies with regards to media and especially that concern (the interpretation of) Islamic values. It is also an invitation to the more conservative citizens to accept a balanced socio-cultural fabric in which women are positioned as equals. The Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman openly discusses in the media his attempt to eradicate fundamentalism within the country and thus the power held by the religious police (that claims to promote "virtue" and discourage "vice") are dismantled. Therefore, observing women in non-cultural, but relatively "decent" to some Saudis, outfits within the magazines is one form to promote "moderate" Islam and emancipate women from socio-cultural notions and conventions of decency (manifested in the Abaya)<sup>90</sup>. On the other hand, the prevalence of the Abaya with the sampled entrepreneurs creates a national, cultural and somewhat religious ascription with the field. The former (no Abaya) is one of the various examples of how the State is working towards modernisation, liberalisation and women's emancipation to open up Saudi society to achieve the ambitious economic reforms. Such liberalisation reforms are also timely given the increased global scrutiny over the country and especially amid becoming a member of the United Nations' Human Rights Council. These emancipation efforts can also be translated into creating global proximities, especially with the West, in terms of sharing equality values. These efforts resonate with one of the main initiatives of Vision 2030, which is the Strategic Partnership Vision Realisation Programme that aims at strengthening the country's position globally as well as regionally.

### ***Vision 2030 and Saudi National Pride***

As stated previously, national pride is deemed by the Vision as one of the main pillars of a vibrant Saudi society. The National Character Enrichment Programme aims at fostering a sense of national belonging and the values rooted within the country's heritage. These values, and more specifically, of Saudi national pride, optimism and encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit, can explain the overarching utilisation of the Saudi nationality, in this study's magazines sample, to identify the field of entrepreneurship as well as the identities of the entrepreneurs. That is, to ascribe both

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<sup>90</sup> The abaya is a cultural attire but many Saudis use it for religious values.

entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurs with a sense of national pride through the continuous adoption of the Saudi identity. It can also explain the prevalence of optimistic and idealistic entrepreneurial accounts and the lack of obstacles and failing experiences within the sampled magazines that construct an ever-successful Saudi entrepreneur. That is, creating an association between “Saudi” and “success”. A Saudi nationalist and optimistic discourse was identified by this study as a discursive strategy to forge entrepreneurship as a favourable pursuit, especially for the youth, to fulfil the economic agenda. This discourse also disseminates a conception of national identity and patriotism that are crucial for citizens to feel unified with their government, which in turn creates more political power. In that, patriotic citizens with a strong national affiliation are less likely to become dissidents against political regimes. Such unity and nationalism are also essential especially amid extant socio-cultural reforms that received the condemnation of many conventional citizens, mostly on Twitter, who were against these “radical” social transformations. This begs the question of how does the lack of representation (of “normal” citizens) in the political sphere yield national identification? (more specifically the lack of female representation within the political domain). It is likely that the representation of specific groups, not necessarily in political discourses, and the recognition of renowned figures within the country can yield a representation or performativity of their nationalism to maintain one’s status. All in all, there is no space for dissidence and hence there can only be an overarching representation and discourse of Saudi national pride to an extent that it overflows onto entrepreneurial discourses.

All in all, the exponential media representation of Saudi women’s entrepreneurial engagement, lifting the driving ban and loosening the male-guardianship law (as aiding some women’s mobility and economic participation) reflect the ways in which liberal ideologies are disseminated. This is an implication of the absolute power held by the current State (i.e. King Salman and his son, Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, behind such reforms) as the country’s policies are usually influenced by, among other governmental members, renowned religious scholars. These scholars, chosen by some members of the Royal Family, usually publicly condemn women’s public engagement or activities through “fatwas”.<sup>91</sup> One example was “conjuring” up

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<sup>91</sup> A “fatwa” is a formal ruling or interpretation on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified legal scholar.

a *fatwa* that aimed at prohibiting women from driving due to claimed health repercussions, which is basically a guise to cover the religious scholars' personal views and condemnation of women's driving. The current Vision 2030 plan, through which female entrepreneurship and economic engagement is promoted, is a tacit message to those conventionalists to remain in place. It is also a message to the global context, especially in the West, that Saudi Arabia is shattering its misogynist image and hence shares resonance with Western values in promoting women's rights. Gaining international approval and support is anticipated by changing perceptions about Saudi Arabia's patriarchal workings through equality discourses embedded within, for instance, the Saudi female entrepreneurship discourses. Therefore, it is not merely power in constructing narratives and images but also in constructing international relationships that are vital for Vision 2030's agenda. Not to mention the current scheme to provide tourism visas as an integral step into a post-oil and globalised era.

#### **11.6. Concluding Notes on Discourse, Power and the Social Construction of Female Entrepreneurship in KSA**

This study's analysis reveals the function of discourse at best, which is to construct knowledge through language and modes of representation about, in this case, female entrepreneurship, institutionalising it through other discourses such as educational and regulatory documents, and in turn, influencing social perspectives and practices revolving around the field. That is, the discourse of female entrepreneurship is embodied in, and stems from, the writings of the magazines, individuals' perceptions and habits and material objects such as the magazines per se. Not only is meaning being produced, but also, a normalisation discourse around entrepreneurship is established. Further, considering power relations embedded within these discourses was significant as it unveils structures or apparatuses that govern the content of knowledge and determine what constitutes female entrepreneurship and socially favourable behaviours or values ascribed to it. The discourses of female entrepreneurship are consequently a social construct as they are forged and perpetuated by those who are in control of the means of communication, namely the State and media organisations. They, in addition to the interviewed female entrepreneurs (to a certain extent), hold the power as they select the language, construct the meaning and what is deemed as true with respect to female entrepreneurship and, thus, create its

“reality”. They accordingly impose a sense of individuality on us by deciding what we discuss when discussing female entrepreneurship in KSA. This form of regulating knowledge about entrepreneurship, by excluding, for instance, the experiences and challenges of under-privileged women, is a discursive mechanism, through which the positive portrayals of entrepreneurship are forged. Foucault’s conceptualisation of power enabled me to view female entrepreneurship as discursively constructed as a domain for the exertion of power and female entrepreneurs as produced through these media representations. These media depictions form as a source of identity for subjects aspiring to be entrepreneurs, and they serve the State’s agenda in ameliorating its image and increasing Saudi females’ participation within the entrepreneurial realm. The notion of the omnipresence of power reveals some women’s contribution in constructing the discourses of female entrepreneurship through sharing their own conceptualisations and experiences. Yet, this power is bounded by discursive strategies that limit what they can say or discuss about their experiences.

All in all, the discourses of female entrepreneurship are conduits and effects of power that shape perceptions and behaviours around both Saudi women and Saudi Arabia. Indeed, there cannot exist a field of knowledge unless it was created by power relations; nor can power relations exist without a field of knowledge. As Foucault succinctly argues: in every society, the production of discourse is selected, modified, controlled and redistributed “by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (Foucault, 1970 p.52). Saudi women were once a muted voice and (still are in some respects) prohibited in their activities regarding sexuality, religion and politics. Then, the increased proliferation of certain Saudi women entrepreneurs in traditional Saudi media is a manifestation of the changing power dynamics that allow new discourses to emerge. Those who own and control the means of communication within the country forge meaning systems around the discourses of female entrepreneurship in KSA by endowing the elitist discourses, found through this study, the status of truth. These discursive mechanisms subsequently impact how we define the field and limit who becomes an entrepreneur while marginalising other forms of understandings, representations and entrepreneurial experiences through which economic and socio-cultural hegemonic practices can occur. Yet, it opens up the possibility to either consent or contend.

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## **Appendices**

### **A. Saudi Arabian Context**

#### **1. Brief History on Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is traced back to the earliest civilisations of the Arabian Peninsula, which over the centuries, has played an imperative role as a historic trade centre and the birthplace of Islam. It was named after the ruling dynasty, the House of Saud; and the name “Arabia” is said to be traced back to many centuries Before Christ (B.C.) (CIA, 2019). The modern state of Saudi Arabia is specifically named after the family of Abdulaziz Al Sa’ud, who established it in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after recapturing Riyadh (Zuhur, 2012), as will be delineated below. Al Sa’ud family originates from the Arab tribe Banu Hanifa, who belong to Banu Bakr descending from Rabi’ah of Adnanite confederation tribes, anciently located in Najd. The term Arabia is derived from “Arab”, which specifically means the Arabic speaking nations or tribes and more broadly who had a nomadic lifestyle (Zuhur, 2012).

#### **2. Polity and Organisation**

Saudi Arabia’s government is a hereditary monarchy headed by the Al-Saud family. The government defines KSA as an Arab and Islamic sovereign state adopting the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad’s teachings) as its main constitution. Shura (consultation) is an Islamic requirement of government, which is also an Arab and bedouin tradition (Zuhur, 2013). It is deemed an absolute monarchy (CIA, 2019; Zuhur, 2013) as it lacks an elected legislative body and political parties are not allowed (Zuhur, 2013); the political process is also constrained to a relatively small portion of the population (Britannica, 2017). However, the State relies on the creation of consensus, it is, then, not absolute authoritarianism. It can be deemed a consultative monarchy since the creation of Majlis Al-Shura, the Consultative Council, that is led by many key governmental positions held by members of the royal family, who ensure the primacy of the royal family through political and governmental action.

**21. The Basic Law of Government:** issued by a royal decree, it serves as the constitutional framework that is based, as mentioned above, on the Qur'an and Sunnah (CIA, 2019). It sets the state's nature, aims and responsibilities in addition to identifying the relationship between the citizens and the ruler. The King, who is currently King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, acts as the Prime Minister and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; ensures the application of the State's general policy according to the Islamic law and supervises the defence of the country. In 1992, the new bylaws were introduced that further outline and explicate the purpose of the Saudi government, which is to ensure the security and rights of all Saudi citizens and residents. It also focuses upon the importance of the family as the nucleus of Saudi society, which plays a vital role in disseminating Islamic values.

**22. The Council of Ministers:** also called the Cabinet, the Council of Ministers is the main executive body of the government that was established by King Abdulaziz in 1953 (Zuhur, 2013). It comprises of 22 different government ministries that are chaired by the King and his deputy every week. This council passes laws that are proposed by the King, the Deputy Prime Minister or key ministers and the Cabinet advises the King and oversees the implementation of many policies such as domestic, international, legal, financial, economic and defence in addition to the State's general affairs. It is the final authority for financial, executive and administrative affairs and is also advised by the Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council).

**23. Majlis Al-Shura (The Consultative Council):** The Majlis, which consists 150 members and 12 committees of appointed businessmen, academic scholars, professionals, government officials and religious leaders, discusses and assesses many arenas such as culture; information; economic; social; health; security; administration; services and public utilities; Islamic and industry plans and has the power to draft, amend or reject laws. These are then proceeded to the Council of Ministers for approval. If both government bodies agree and the King assents, the action is taken. If one body or group dissents, the King makes the decision (Zuhur, 2013).



### **3. Economic Context**

After the discovery of oil in 1938 (BBC, 2019), the country became the world's largest repository of petroleum and has the largest reserve pumping capacity for oil (Mideastweb, 2003), which enabled it to begin commercial production after World War II (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The then US company, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), discovered the first offshore field in the Middle East and oil was discovered in the zone itself in 1953 (Britannica, 2017). Saudi Arabia has then taken over ARAMCO in 1980 (BBC, 2019). The advancements of oil production increased revenues, which in return permitted the development of industrial infrastructure and social services such as education, transportation, health care and so on (Al-Rasheed, 2010). Its economy is still dominated by petroleum and its linked industries and the oil industry remains the largest aspect of the economy generating 43 percent of real GDP (Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2016). The country's petroleum reserves are estimated to account to 22 percent of the world's resources, which makes Saudi Arabia the largest exporter of petroleum (OPEC, 2018). Saudi Arabia is considered the world's twentieth-largest economy based upon gross domestic product (GDP), which represented 1.2 percent of the global economy in 2016 (Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2016) and 1.8 in 2019 (International Monetary Fund, 2019). In 2018, it was responsible for 16.1 percent of global oil exports that accounted to \$182.5 billion in value (Twin, 2019). Despite engendering wealth, the dependence on oil puts KSA's economy in a critical position and especially in retrospect to 2014 when the oil price plummeted. The Saudi oversupply of oil in 2014 and the declined global demand for crude oil caused its prices to consequently plunge, which in turn hampered Saudi Arabia's economy (Goldwyn, 2015). The instability and finite nature of the oil market drove the country to reconsider its economic activities and diversify its economy by investing in more sustainable options. This need for reform has been associated predominately with Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman (the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and President of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs) who in 2016 initiated Vision 2030, or the National Development Plan (NDP), which is the Kingdom's long-term strategy for economic and social reform. Predominantly, (NTP) works towards the government's medium-term goals; it sets to increase non-oil revenue, create new jobs and expand women's roles in the workforce (Oxford Business

Group, 2017). Vision 2030 is based on three main pillars: a thriving economy, a vibrant society and an ambitious nation that are to be in effect throughout all governmental bodies based upon their sectors. One of the main objectives of this vision is increasing Saudi women's economic participation, which rests upon the Ministry of Labour and Social Development's responsibilities that oversees and implements the labour market policies. Besides recognising the significance of diversifying the economy, there is emphasis on the increase of privatisation (Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2016). The private sector accounted for 39.5 percent of real GDP in 2015. Vision 2030 aims at increasing the private sector engagement and targets lifting its GDP from 40 percent to 60 percent by 2020 (Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2016). Much of the growth is expected to generate from small and medium businesses, whose contribution is estimated to rise from 20 percent to 35 percent (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

### **3.1. Saudi Labour Market**

There existed two prevalent interconnected features of the Saudi labour market: the dependence on foreign labour in the private sector at employment conditions and wages that are unattractive to Saudi nationals, and the strong inclination for Saudis to prefer the public sector. I am aware of the common rhetoric that young Saudi people seeking for job opportunities refrain from what Burton (2016) deemed it menial or tradecraft work. According to Burton, if one is without a university degree, being a taxi driver, hotel desk receptionist, shop merchant or waiter is deemed beneath oneself. If one has a university degree, they prefer secure employment opportunities in governmental sectors or managerial positions in the private sector upon graduating. It should be noted, however, that this "trend" is changing, and many young Saudis are observed to be working in restaurants, cafés, shops and are increasingly being employed as taxi, Uber and Careem<sup>1</sup> drivers. Saudi workers generally dominate the public sector while non-Saudis dominate the private arena (OECD, 2011). The numerous structural imbalances that the Saudi labour market incur encompass high reliance on foreign labour, an acute gender gap in labour supply, high unemployment rates especially of Saudi youth and significant wage disparities between educated Saudis and expatriates (OECD, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Careem is the Arabic equivalent of Uber that is a mass transportation and delivery service based in the Middle Eastern region.

### **3.2. Labour Force**

The labour force participation rate of the total population (of 15 years and above) accounted for 58.2 percent (increasing by 1.8 from Q1 2019); males represented 80.4 percent while females accounted to 25.4 percent (GASTAT, 2020). Saudi nationals accounted for 46.2 percent of the labour force: 65.8 percent represents Saudi males' activity while 25.9 percent depicts the Saudi female economic engagement (GASTAT, 2020), which highlights the vast gender disparity within the economic force. On a positive note, the Saudi female labour force participation increased from 20.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018 to 20.5 in the first quarter of 2019 (Jadwa Investment, 2019) and to 25.9 percent in 2020. Yet, there is a decrease of 0.1 from Q4 2019.

### **3.3. Unemployment Rate**

Overall, the unemployment rate reached to 12.5 percent in 2019 declining from 12.7 percent in 2018, which reached its lowest rate since 2016 (Jadwa Investment, 2019). In 2020, the total unemployment rate accounted for 5.7 percent, which is a stable rate from Q1 2019 (GASTAT, 2020). With regards to women, in particular, the unemployment rate declined from 32.5 percent to 31.7 percent in 2019 while male unemployment remained the same at 6.6 percent (GASTAT, 2019). In Q1 2020, the Saudi unemployment rate decreased from 12 percent (in Q4 2019) to 11.8 percent due to the decrease in Saudi women's unemployment rate amounting to 28.2 percent from 30.8 percent in Q4 2019 (GASTAT, 2020). One explication provided by the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre (Mulligan, 2019) to the high female unemployment rate is that the potential employees (supply of labour) are not adept to fulfil the market demands. This could mean Saudi graduates acquire non-relevant skills to meet this demand and thus do not possess the skills required to perform the jobs available (Mulligan, 2019).

The decreasing Saudi unemployment rate can also be explained through the state of foreign workers. The MLSD stated that the government satisfied the increased demand of labour, that echoes KSA's plan to undergo economic change, by welcoming

expatriate workers in 2015 whose labour force participation reached up to 6.3 million workers (from 6.1 million in 2014) (MLSD, 2016). During the first quarter of 2019, however, a total number of 185 thousand foreign workers left the labour market in KSA, which pushed the total number of foreign departures to 1.8 million since the beginning of 2017 (Jadwa Investment, 2019)<sup>2</sup>. This in turn explicates the expanding work opportunities provided to Saudis seeking jobs. The Ministry acknowledged that sectors such as the government, public administration, defence and education are vital employers for Saudis. Nevertheless, the accommodation of the expanding Saudi population should come from the private sectors, which currently employs a low number of Saudis (MLSD, 2016). The MLSD hence introduced various measures to further encourage the private sector to hire Saudis; it announced the employment of 64 thousand Saudis through agreements made with both the private and public entities in sectors such as housing, real estate and IT (Jadwa Investment, 2019).

#### **4. Policies and Initiatives**

##### **4.1. The *Saudization* Program**

To increase the number of employed Saudis in the country, especially in the private sector, the *Saudization* program was established in 1970 with the first Saudi Government DP. Due to the continuously rising unemployment rates and an expanding Saudi population, the program became a priority for the government in 1990. A *Saudization* target rate (Saudi employment as percent of total employment) is normally set in the DPs. The government is currently working on its tenth DP (2015- 2019) (Koyame-Marsh, 2016). Under the program, all private organisations, irrespective of their size and economic activity are required to have 30 percent of their labour force occupied by Saudis. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011), the *Saudization* policies have espoused different

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<sup>2</sup> To increase local workers, the State imposed taxes on companies that choose to hire expatriate workers (300-400 SAR per worker each month). The rising cost of living also affected low-waged foreign earners, which also caused the departure of workers predominantly from the building and construction sectors.

approaches to indigenise the labour force. Some of the measures include improving Saudi workers' skills and employability opportunities, and the imposition of minimum quotas in certain industries for Saudis in addition to reserving certain occupations for them.

The *Saudization* program was not initially successful in reducing the Saudi unemployment rate; lack of skills and work ethics, lack of strategic planning by the government and the private sector, mismatch between acquired skills and required ones, work circumstances and socio-economic constraints were some of the factors that caused its failure (Koyame-Marsh, 2016). The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has therefore introduced the *Nitaqat* program in 2011 as a supplemental program. *Nitaqat* stands for “zones” or “bands” in Arabic, and it aims to increase work opportunities for Saudis in the private sector by adopting a set of different policies than *Saudization*. It measures the nationalisation performance of organisations by calculating the employed Saudi nationals average of the percentage taking into consideration the firm's size and economic activity (Koyame-Marsh, 2016). The *Nitaqat* system classifies companies into the following categories: Platinum, Green (both represent the highest ratios of Saudi nationals), Yellow and Red (represent the lowest ratios of employed Saudis) based on the size of the entity and percentage of Saudi nationals to foreign workers in the workforce (E&Y, 2017). Organisations within the Platinum and Green classifications can benefit from favourable treatments with regards to immigration procedures for onboarding foreign employees. The MLSA amended the *Nitaqat* program, as part of KSA's Vision 2030, by implementing SAIFI training initiative, which took effect in 2017, to gain and promote a better understanding of the local labour market's needs and to promote training and development of Saudi nationals (E&Y, 2017).

#### **4.2. The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF)**

The HRDF was established by the Cabinet of Ministers, and it aims at supporting the endeavours of training and recruiting the Saudi national workforce in the private sector. The Fund also provides finances, services, programs and studies that adheres to the labour market needs and expectations in addition to providing support tailored towards entrepreneurs. Under the HRDF, there are various initiatives such as:

**Hafiz, Searching for Employment** is a program that provides job seekers motivational and training services in addition to financial support up to 15,000 SAR for a year (upon meeting the terms and conditions) to enable job search. Job seekers enrolled in the respective program have access to job placement centres, Liqaat career fares, TAQAT, an online platform offering employment and training services, and educational offerings.

#### **4.3. Qiwa**

*Qiwa* is a program launched by the MLSD, which is an online platform that aims at reducing the unemployment rate to serve Vision 2030's agenda. The program in particular aims at creating more than 561, 000 private-sector jobs by 2030. It provides a combined employment service under one electronic website in addition to providing Saudi government professionals with statistical data to tackle barriers and challenges incurred by employers and employees.

#### **4.4. Monshaat**

Monshaat is established by the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises in 2016 to organise, sponsor and develop the SME sector in accordance to best international practices to increase its productivity to contribute to the country's GDP from 20 to 35 percent by 2030. The initiative implements projects and programs that encourage the culture of entrepreneurship; diversifying sources of financial support for SMEs; set policies and standards and stimulate venture capital initiatives.

#### **4.5. Misk Foundation**

Misk Foundation is a non-profit foundation established by Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman to encourage leadership development in youth. Through incubators, Misk helps in developing the intellectual capital of potential young professionals. Its primary objective is to transform KSA into a global centre for purpose-driven innovation.

## B. Critical Discourse Analysis – Description

### 1. Micro Level:

According to Benham and Mahmoudy (2013) who drew upon Fairclough (1995), lexical choices are used in texts to infer a level of authority with the readers. In light of the latter, I used some of Fairclough's (2013) CDA tools<sup>3</sup> that enabled me to analyse the magazines' articles at a micro level (then at a meso and macro level) to unveil the embedded ideologies or power relations that contribute in forging a specific construction of female entrepreneurship. The chosen CDA tools are:

#### 1.1. Lexical Analysis:

In this simple analysis, the choice of words used were analysed. In particular, I used this tool as the primary one to analyse the types of words used in the articles to describe female entrepreneurs and their practices, and whether exists a predominance of certain descriptions or words to construct the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship. To proceed with the analysis, I deployed a software called *WordSmith Tools*<sup>4</sup> through which I utilised its sub-tools or programs to analyse the use of words. For each magazine, I combined all the chosen articles in one file (copy-pasted the articles into a Text file as applicable to the software).<sup>5</sup>

#### 1.2. Over Lexicalisation

As another form of *micro level* analysis, *Over Lexicalisation* concerns itself with over description. Through this, I analysed whether there are any over-elaborations in the chosen articles such as the use of “female entrepreneur”, “female entrepreneurship”, “women business owner”, “female career(s)”, or any reference to gender in relation to

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<sup>3</sup> See Hansen, A. and Machin, D. eds. 2013. *Media and communication research methods*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.116-146.

<sup>4</sup> The software does not work in Macintosh operating system, so I installed Windows through VMware Fusion.

<sup>5</sup> I then used *WordList*, a sub-program in *WordSmith Tools*, that enabled me to extract a list of all the used words in alphabetic order and in frequency of appearance. I focused on the words that are pertinent to my research objectives such as, *female entrepreneur*, *entrepreneurship*, *women*, *family*, *creativity* and the mentioned fields. To espouse a more qualitative approach, the next sub-tool, *Concord*, enabled me to analyse the pertinent words in their context or in the sentence in which they appeared. That is, the program elaborated the concordances and listed all the occurrences of a certain word (I chose and typed) in a chosen number of texts; it also displayed the sentences where the word appears in each case and then linked the sentences to the texts where they appeared.

a job title. This is deemed over lexicalisation as it can infer the existence of an issue, peculiarity, or unconventionality of some sort.

### **1.3. Naming and Reference**

The way that individuals are named or referred to in a text can have crucial implications upon how they are viewed (Fairclough, 2013). Further, the way certain aspects are highlighted or concealed helps position people in the social world. In light of the latter, I analysed the ways in which female entrepreneurs were referred to in order to analyse the correlation of this representation to their social and economic positionality. In particular, I focused on whether some of the chosen texts within the magazines associate the female workers to the domestic realm as a part of their identities, or whether they ascribe them with essentialist ascriptions such as being feminine, caregiving, emotional, naturally fit to a certain realm, and so on. These inferences to the domestic realm such as motherhood or the family when addressing female entrepreneurship can reveal tacit gender ideologies and stereotypes ascribed to women that can be taken for granted. That is, there can exist an inevitable association to the private sphere or work-family life balance when representing women business owners, which can suggest an essentialist view to women as to where they “naturally” fit within society. van Dijk (1993) designates this process as “ideological squaring” through which texts align us with or against people.

### **1.4. Classification of Social Actors**

Van Leeuwen (1996 cited in Fairclough, 2013 p.127) provides numerous ways in which people can be systematically classified or referred to. First, they can be either *Individualised* or *collectivised*. In this analysis, I was particularly interested in how the texts within the chosen magazines describe women entrepreneurs in terms of their individuality and uniqueness. I analysed the representations in each of the chosen texts and examined whether each women entrepreneur is discussed as someone individually unique or as part of a community of “female” entrepreneurs that can essentially unite women due to their gender. This can infer that the magazines construct a universal conceptualisation of female entrepreneurship by coalescing them under one category.



Second is the *specification/generalisation* classification of actors. Through this subcategory of CDA, I analysed whether the magazines devoted space to discuss and represent women entrepreneurs' businesses in sufficient detail and account for their entrepreneurial experiences rather than merely and generically describing their businesses or achievements. This analysis infers whether female entrepreneurs are taken seriously, if women entrepreneurship is of significance or is it an ostensible concern to highlight Vision 2030 aims of increasing women's participation in the economic realm.

### **1.5. Suppression**

In this analysis, I considered what is missing from the texts after measuring them against my understanding of how entrepreneurship is endemically conceived and depicted against the interview data. This resonates with the above *specification/generalisation* analysis as whether there is a lack of specificity in terms of women's practices and experiences. I considered *suppression* in the sense that is there a lack of account to how women conceive of entrepreneurship? If so, what definitions, conceptualisations or understandings are the magazines' texts using?

Presupposition is one part of *suppression* and through this analysis I explored what is taken for granted in the magazines' texts. I analysed whether the concept of entrepreneurship or relevant ones such as creativity, are explained or not. This highlights whether there is a ubiquitous and universal meaning of what entrepreneurship is rather than allowing it to be a malleable term. Another focus was on the women's roles in society as either conventional or defeating obsolete conceptions.

## **2. Meso Level**

In this level, CDA was employed to investigate the relationship between language, power relations and ideology that can be embedded either explicitly or tacitly in the chosen magazines sample. Text at the meso level is deemed as representative of something taking place in the larger social context that is infused with power relations and is construed by the readers (or listeners) based upon the rules and norms of the society in which they are embedded (Benham and Mahmoudy, 2013). The meso level

is ascribed with the discursive mechanisms that link texts with obscured power structures. From this perspective and at this level of analysis, I interpreted the discursive practices that produce the texts by analysing the language used in the magazines and the discursive strategies such as stereotyping, argumentation or persuasion.

### **3. Macro Level**

Drawing upon Benham and Mahmoudy's (2013) interpretation of the macro level, at this stage I considered the intertextual relationships (between the magazines' texts and other prevalent institutional discourses). I also considered the texts in light of the socio-cultural, socio-economic and (to some extent) political milieu in which they are embedded. Also, I examined the findings against Vision 2030's messages in relations to women's roles in the socio-economic fabric.

## C. Critical Discourse Analysis – Findings

### 1. Micro Analysis

#### 1.1. Lexicalisation

With respect to the words adopted by the chosen magazines sample to describe women and/or their businesses, by either the magazine editors or the women entrepreneurs themselves, it can be observed that the majority, if not all, words are (arguably endemically perceived as) positive such as *confident*, *passionate*, *beautiful*, *fun* and indeed sometimes aggrandise either the woman or the business per se (e.g. *great*, *scintillating*, *brilliant*). It is also evident from the data that there is recognition of some of the women's businesses, accomplishments and/or rewards as being the first nationally or internationally that is manifested in the lemma "first". To exemplify:

Lexicalisation	Quotation	Source
"First"	<p>"It is the first business in Jeddah to introduce video promo services to fashion businesses."</p> <p>"The gym was able to successfully open the first CrossFit box for women in Riyadh."</p> <p>"It was the first initiative that was oriented towards the youth in the Gulf region".</p>	<p><i>Destination Jeddah</i> – January 2016: 30 Under 30: The List of Young Saudi Mavericks Leading the Kingdom's New Generation of Entrepreneurs</p>
	<p>"Loud Art is my first and only art movement that I have worked on."</p>	<p><i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2016: Raneen Bukhari, Connoisseur Walks Us Through Her World of Art and How Her Life is Submerged into It</p>
	<p>"She registered as the first Saudi woman in the Stevie awards, and she was the first Saudi woman in the competition to achieve the first place in the Stevie Awards."</p> <p>"After that Al Yousef launched her own company, ICG, to become one of the first female Saudis in the consultancy business."</p>	<p><i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2018: ITHRAA: A Profound Growing and Expanding Experience</p>

Lexicalisation	Quotation	Source
“First”	“Fashion history was made with the publication of the first street style book from Saudi Arabia.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018
	“Once Upon a Chair charms its guests with its liveliness, it is the first shop to redefine the vintage shopping experience in Jeddah.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> - April 2018
	The first coal factory run by Saudi females. (Translation from Arabic)	Entrepreneurs KSA – May 2016
	I decided with my partner, Fatimah Mosalli, to establish the first company in the management arena. (Translation from Arabic)  She was the first Saudi woman to obtain a scholarship from Cambridge University to pursue a PhD in Biotechnology. (Translation from Arabic)  Nouf obtained... the first place in <i>Bader</i> competition. (Translation from Arabic)  The Ministry of Health recorded the first (female) professor...in Pharmacology” (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i> – June 2016
	“Al-Hamad is the first Saudi female board member of the Saudi Arabian Motorsport Federation. She is ...the first Saudi woman to drive in the Formula One.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine

Table 13: Lexicalisation – “First”

## 1.2. Over Lexicalisation

There is an over-adoption of the adjective Saudi. The program Concord enabled me to analyse the collocates of the lemma “Saudi”; that is, I was able to examine and analyse the associated words attached to *Saudi*. This can enable understanding of the elements (either people or artefacts) that are being branded with a national identity or are being categorised as belonging to a specific national group. With the exception of using *Saudi Arabia*, *Saudi* is found to be highly associated with, or attached to, the female business owner. There are many instances in which the magazines (and the women themselves) had to identify the entrepreneur or the business itself as being Saudi. The ensuing are examples of the latter:

Over Lexicalisation	Quotation	Source
“Saudi”	“Nora Al Okail is a young Saudi businesswoman.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – January 2016
	“Saudi fashion editor and luxury consultant Marriam Mossalli, decided to launch her Under the Abaya.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018
	“Ninetyd, a Saudi creative online platform/network that supports local talent, was started by Mona Balhemar in 2014.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018
	“Saudi art entrepreneur Najla AlBassam is the genius behind Haya Design Studio and Kartt & Co.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Being a Saudi businesswoman has been one of my greatest assets!”	<i>About Her</i> magazine

Table 14: Over Lexicalisation – “Saudi”

Another fundamental finding is the over-lexicalisation of the gender specificity attached to the career name, business type, award names, target audience, and so on. To further elaborate, there are numerous mentions of the lemmas “female” and “woman/women” before; for instance, the word *entrepreneur* or *business*:

Over Lexicalisation	Quotation	Source
<b>“Female/Woman/ Women”</b>	It is the first official trip abroad for a delegation of female entrepreneurs. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i> – November 2017
	“Al-Hamad is the first Saudi female board member of the Saudi Arabian Motorsport Federation. She is ...the first Saudi woman to drive in the Formula One.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Blossom launched its first accelerator cohort last month, where four top tier start-ups led by Saudi female founders were accepted to participate in two exhilarating and intense weeks of accelerating their start-ups.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – May 2018
	“I’m actually going on tour with King Abdullah Centre for World Culture in the US to talk about the female entrepreneur.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“The lab was launched with the intention to bridge the educational gap, strengthen Saudi female architects and planners by introducing them to people with foreign experience, and develop their mind as designers through the various panels held during the Lab on topics such as education and culture.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2018
	“...Marriam Mossalli, decided to launch her Under the Abaya initiative last summer when she was asked to speak about female entrepreneurship by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture in Los Angeles.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018

Table 15: Over Lexicalisation – “Female/Woman/Women”

This study falls into the trap of over-lexicalisation as the research deploys *female entrepreneurship* and *female entrepreneurs*. It is not, however, the intention to essentialise women as a group, but rather to highlight that there do not exist sufficient researches about the entrepreneurial experiences of these individuals who happen to be grouped according to their biological traits, which thus recognises and constructs them as females. This is a very radical argument to state within a highly conservative context as it can be read that *women* as a group do not “naturally” exist but rather are socially constructed. I argue that despite there are biological similarities among

women, there is a plethora of performances and conceptualisations around women not to mention women's positionality depends on the context in which they are embedded. Further, these biological similarities should not be translated into universal social dispositions or discourses in which they encapsulate women. Another form of over-lexicalisation, in my point of view, is the utilisation of the word *young* to describe the business owner. Not only there is emphasis on the gender, but also how youthful these women are that in turn emphasises their exceptionality, for example:

Over Lexicalisations	Quotation	Source
“Young”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – January 2016: 30 Under 30: The List of Young Saudi Mavericks Leading the Kingdom's New Generation of Entrepreneurs.	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – January 2016
	“Saudi Arabia is home to number of rising stars, young women from all walks of life.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“The young entrepreneur is the founder and CEO of Yattooq, a fresh innovative Arabic coffee start-up.	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Despite being the youngest female Saudi, she was appointed as CEO for a group of companies in the kingdom.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2018

Table 16: Over Lexicalisation – “Young”

### **1.3. Naming and Referencing**

In the respective part, it has been delineated that the ways in which a person or an artefact is named and/or alluded to has pivotal implications upon how they are perceived and positioned in the social world. In light of this, I analysed the naming and referencing revolving around the women entrepreneurs either by the magazines or the women themselves. With regards to naming, many women were addressed by their names and their job title. Indeed, all women's full names (forename and surname) were mentioned in the chosen articles. This is vital to note as there were (and presently) individuals or families who do not prefer disclosing the name of the woman member, and in other cases it was observed that some women do not provide their last names publicly, which has been noted as a cultural or social behaviour. The analysed magazines sample illustrates otherwise, which can indicate a type of social reform. In terms of referencing, there are a multiplicity of ascriptions associated with women. Some of the main ones that pertain to this study is the reference to motherhood, the family or domesticity in general.

### **1.4. Classification of Social Actors**

#### **Individualism/Collectivism**

With regards to individualisation, I have analysed whether the chosen sample depicts women as individually unique or as being a part of a "community" of female entrepreneurs. I have regarded that in every instance in which the magazine devotes a full article (sometimes more than one page) about the female entrepreneur(s) as individualisation as their personal and professional experiences and narratives are accounted for while also providing sufficient information about their businesses, such as aims, target audience, business process, accomplishments. Another form of individualisation, in my point of view, is providing the women with a platform to speak about their individual and unique experiences. These are manifest in the quotes included in the articles that are obtained through the interviews led by the magazines.

Conversely, the magazines (and some interviewed women) in some instances tend to, either deliberately or inadvertently, collectivise women as a homogenous group with similar roles, objectives and interests. In other words, they are essentialising women



in examples such as: “Saudi women’s role in society”, “golden age for Saudi women”, “women are more drawn to beauty”, “when it comes to what women really want in jewellery...” and “the Arabian woman.”

### **Specification/Generalisation**

In the respective section, I analysed whether the magazines devoted space to discuss and represent women entrepreneurs’ businesses in sufficient detail and account for their entrepreneurial experiences rather than merely and generically describing their businesses or achievements. It can be thus viewed in conjunction to the previous part (individualisation/collectivisation) or used interchangeably as they have similar functions, which are to examine whether women’s businesses and experiences are accounted for in sufficient detail or generalised with other entrepreneurial experiences. The findings unveil that since there are many articles dedicated to each entrepreneur (or group of entrepreneurs), it suggests that there is specificity and thus individualisation, as opposed to mere generalisations, with regards to the represented businesses and their owners. On the other hand, there are magazine issues in which there are only small columns that generically describe the business.

### **1.5. Presupposition**

As mentioned above, presupposition is one part of *suppression* that indicates that there are missing elements within a text such as explanations. I have therefore analysed the words that are being adopted without clarifications as to infer a universal conceptualisation and understanding of them. I have found that there are numerous presuppositions; some of which include: the presupposition of what *entrepreneurship* is, that there is *female entrepreneurship* and *male entrepreneurship*, of what *creative* means and/or what *creativity* entails, what Saudi traditions are, of what Saudi women’s role in society is and that all represented female entrepreneurs had or have seamless journeys establishing and running their businesses.

#### **D. Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about yourself (age, city, education, interests, family background).
2. Tell me about your business:
  - a. Name,
  - b. objectives,
  - c. projects,
  - d. target audience,
  - e. establishment year,
  - f. barriers,
  - g. enablers,
  - h. and any other information you would like to share.
3. What does entrepreneurship mean to you, or how would you define it?
4. Do you remember the moment you realised you wanted to become an entrepreneur? Tell me about specific people/events/circumstances that led you to this point in your life and the path of entrepreneurship.
5. Have any previous jobs or workplace experiences specifically influenced you to become an entrepreneur? How so?
6. Does your personal life affect your business? For example, if you were a mother or wife, how do these personal roles affect your business endeavours?
7. What role do support groups and networking play in your life as an entrepreneur?
8. What role do values play in your decision to become an entrepreneur?
9. In your opinion, what are the personal traits or characteristics necessary to become an entrepreneur?
10. How are you different from other women who are not entrepreneurs (personality-wise)?
11. What does it mean to be a female entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia?
12. Do you think that there is a difference between how females and males lead entrepreneurial careers or do business in general? If so, how?
13. How does media affect your business?
14. What is your opinion of Saudi media?

## E. Meso Analysis Data

### References to Pioneering – Interviews

References to Success	Quotation	Source
<b>Pioneering</b>	<p>“Women through modern history of Saudi Arabia had so many barriers placed upon her and we’re still seeing firsts. Just like in America your seeing firsts for black women and black men because they were oppressed. I just saw recently the first sex therapist from Saudi Arabia...The first woman that works in NASA. The first, I don’t know. These things that have been happening for decades elsewhere in the world. So yeah, I guess these things definitely affect us.”</p> <p>“Before if a woman wants to study political science or diplomacy, it’s like why? And where will you work? These positions are opening up and it makes more sense. So, you open more opportunities for women to do different things then what they could have done before, which was doctor teacher. That’s it, doctor, teacher. What else?”</p>	Interviewee 6 (I.6)
	<p>“Now we are looking at, to come out with the first Saudi runway model.”</p> <p>“What is that- Saudi privilege?” Saudi female working in an industry that has zero men where I was one of the first to come in.”</p>	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“I became the first international board-certified lactation consultant in the private sector of Saudi...”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)
	“When Saudi Arabia mentioned it was going to have municipal council elections, I was very passionate about that, and I said that I would run for elections. It did not happen, but I was one of the first three women. Actually, the first woman in our region.”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	“I was among the first Saudi women to be a certified ICF coach.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	<p>“Are we highlighting women more and more? If we go and keep going around and saying, the first Saudi woman to do this and the first Saudi woman to do that or the first ... Of course, we are highlighting this. But if we’re showcasing the reality, these women, they didn’t just happen now.”</p>	Interviewee 7 (I.7)

Table 17: References to Pioneering – Interviews

## F. Findings

### Theme One: The Elitist Entrepreneur

#### 1. Financial Security – Interviews

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
Financial Security	“I was making \$10,000 and just enjoying my summer even more.”  “...so I started my company. It started literally with a \$5,000 saving.”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	“The kids say, “Mama, mama, you could be pooing money right now.” I’m looking at them. I’m saying, “Yeah, I could, couldn’t I? But I just don’t know how.” That’s not really my focus...”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	“I had SAR100,000 to start my [businesses]. I got that from my father, but he didn’t give it to me to start the businesses. He gave it to me because it was a part of profits from the company, so I ended up with that and I chose to put that in the businesses to start them.”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)
	“It started out with the money that I’d make from the sessions to go back in it. ...It’s also nice to not worry about financials when you have someone [husband] taking care of you as well.”	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“...Family support, support from my husband, the support from the family, helping us financially and morally...”	Interviewee 15 (I.15)
	“I have been financially independent since I was in high school because I got a scholarship.	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“I launched my business with a financial help...”	Interviewee 2 (I.2)
	“I launched my label in the year of 2014 with the generous sponsorship of [name].”	Interviewee 3 (I.3)
	“I did really well financially 2014, 2015. And if we compare it to salary, I would consider myself paid really well.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“I hate taking loans or asking for loans. I try to start businesses and concepts in my own means.”	Interviewee 6 (I.6)
	“I did not get any help from my father.” “I have zero investors or financial support from outside.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	The main support for our project came from our own savings in addition to family support. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA – 2016</i>

Table 18: References to Financial Security

## 2. Opportunity/ Personal Motivation – Interviews

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Opportunity/ Personal Motivations</b>	“I took some time during the summers to take extra courses in a somewhat different field. That’s when I decided to quit my job and freelance or create space for something else to come along.”	Interviewee 11 (I.11)
	“When I moved, it was like okay, what’s the option for me to live my dream? Okay, start your own business.”	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“After my son has gone to college, I am grateful to have the opportunity to put my time to use in something I believe will benefit both my country and me.”	Interviewee 16 (I.16)
	“I started my own business four years ago...I ended it this year and then moved on to my next. I left only because I wanted to venture out on my own. I didn’t feel like I was growing as a person nor did I feel that the company was growing.”	Interviewee 17 (I.17)
	“When I saw a void in the market and my mentor was basically like, “Why are you not doing this as a job?” When I was giving advice and helping her with the PR and the branding and her strategy for market penetration.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	[Certification name] “encouraged me to open a centre, because so many people would call me for help and they would call me for support, and I was going to their houses and I thought, I can’t keep doing this. I need to have a centre where I could have appointments and stuff.”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)

Table 19: References to Opportunity/Personal Motivations

### 3. Educational Background

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Educational Background</b>	“For my master’s I went to England and I came back to Saudi, started working.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“...then boarding school in Switzerland, and then Washington D.C. for University.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“I have a bachelor’s degree in Visual Communications and Fine Art with a minor in Italian. I have a master’s degree in International Management.”	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	“I studied in London. I have a BA in Interior Design.”	Interviewee 15 (I.15)
	“I have studied abroad and graduated from New York, USA.”	Interviewee 16 (I.16)
	“Zainab Alireza discovered her love for architecture after a career discovery program at Harvard Graduate School of Design.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2018
	“I have a bachelor’s degree in Psychology, master’s in Health Fitness Management, and a Doctorate Degree in Health Administration.” “I was studying in the United States...”	Interviewee 5 (I.5)
	“I studied art, and then I also started Special Education, specialised in behavioural disorders.”	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“An MIS graduate with experience in various companies...”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2016
	Her love for the business world pushed her to pursue a master’s in Marketing from King Abdul-Aziz University. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i> – 2016
	“I was pursuing my PhD in London while I had started my business in Saudi Arabia.”	Interviewee 2 (I.2)

Table 20: References to Educational Background

#### 4. Access (information, training, networks, and media) – Magazines

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
Access (information, training, networks, and media)	<p>“In 2014, she was invited to speak at MIT and was First Lady Michelle Obama’s guest at the "Celebration of Design" event at the White House.”</p> <p>“She built relationships with Michael Kors, Carolina Herrera, Christian Louboutin and Diane von Furstenburg...”</p>	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – January 2016
	“I did do a few courses in the summer at Sotheby’s, but nothing is like learning on the job. Life is good.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2016
	<p>“After graduating from university, [she] apprenticed at Georland, a famous high jewellery shop in Paris, learning the nuts and bolts of designing couture jewellery.</p> <p>- Showcasing her creations high-profile exhibitions is equally important.”</p>	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – December 2017
	“We were invited to the idea Conference by the Lego Foundation in Denmark.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – July 2017
	“Alireza recently collaborated with Roudaina Al Khany, director at Platforms UK, to form Saudi Women Architects and Planners Sustainable Cities Lab.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2018
	<p>“When Misk Art Foundation &amp; Crossway UK asked me to participate at their first Art Books Jeddah Fair this month, I decided to give it one last push”</p> <p>“Under the Abaya was produced by Niche Arabia in partnership with Cadillac Saudi Arabia and published by local Saudi publishing house Kholoud Abdulrahman Attar Publishing House.”</p>	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018
	<p>“Linjawi was invited to give a TED Talk in which she spoke about idea sharing in Saudi Arabia.”</p> <p>“She headed to London to host the 2017 Arab Women of the Year awards London’s Jumeirah Carlton.”</p> <p>“Her work at Haya Design helped her build a network of artists from the Arab region...”</p>	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Zahran has obtained numerous training certifications including the International Sport Science Association (ISSA), VIPR, TRX, XLR8, BOSU, Insanity, and ZUU level one.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – May 2018

Table 21: References to Access (information, training, networks, and media) – Magazines

## 5. Travel/Lifestyle/Cultural Taste – Magazines

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
Travel/Lifestyle/Cultural Taste	“she enjoyed visiting the high jewellery shops at London’s Bond Street and Paris’s Place Vendome with her mother.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> –December 2017
	“Spending her youth in Egypt, Binzagr returned to her home country only to be welcomed by an overwhelming sensation of nostalgia.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> –February 2017
	“Dr. Dandachi...is also a pianist by passion. As a child, Dr. Dandachi played a number of recitals and later learned how to play both Arabic and foreign pieces just by listening, going on to participate in several national events.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	[Her] “...gallery consists of...personal artworks, ...personal collection of traditional Hijazi attire and antique objects collected over a span of her lifetime.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – February 2017

Table 22: References to Travel/Lifestyle/Cultural Taste – Magazines



## 6. The Seamlessness of Opening/Running a Business

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>The Seamlessness of Opening/Running a Business</b>	“Within a week, I gathered my “potential” partners and decided to just do it! Confirming “what you seek is seeking you.””	Interviewee 11 (I.11)
	“It wasn’t a goal that I’m gonna do my own business. I liked working with people, having a common vision. Somehow it just happened, and it felt right.”	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“If you have a dream and are capable of running after it, what is stopping you?”  “Powered by the support of our Royal family - government and youth, there is no dream big enough to stop us. We will achieve, we will succeed, and we will become a global force.”  “If you are passionate about something, from the smallest thing to the biggest, nurture that and make it grow. Work on it and it will happen. If you believe that it is the right thing for you, just do it. Don’t wait for anything else because we always have the usual obstacles of money, society and many more. But trust me, if you just take the first step, everything will grow out easily.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“...for me it was just always about the trade of the old days...put down your costs to the minimum and your expenses and have multiple resources or income channels, so that if one doesn’t work the other one is going to carry the business.”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	“It (entrepreneurship) came naturally, I invited a group of my friends to help me start the magazine.”	Interviewee 12 (I.12)
	“I don’t fully believe that the money is what you actually need to start a business. It’ll just find its way. Like if you just put the work in it’ll just find its way.”	Interviewee 17 (I.17)

Table 23: References to the Seamlessness of Opening/Running a Business

## 7. Family Support

Privileges/Enablers	Quotation	Source
<b>Family Support</b>	<p>“I think the support of my mom’s side of the family, that was huge. Whatever you wanted to do, they were there for you. Just being able to see more of life and being open to these certifications was a gift.”</p> <p>“I find a lot of support from my family and my husband.”</p>	Interviewee 14 (I.14)
	“I am grateful to my family for encouraging me to keep moving forward, their support was integral.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“My family and friends have been superstars throughout the whole process.”	Interviewee 3 (I.3)
	“I am privileged to be in a family and married to a man that support and do not hinder my dreams.”	Interviewee 6 (I.6)
	<p>“When I think of it years later, because of me, my entire family was uprooted and moved to Jordan so that we all get equal education.”</p> <p>“My parents, each of them, always were massive supporters.”</p>	Interviewee 7 (I.7)
	“My family is, I would assume, progressive conservative. They withhold the faith, but at the same time, the faith does not prevent women from doing anything...”	Interviewee 9 (I.9)
	“The thing that enabled my business is...family support, support from my husband, the support from the family, helping us financially and morally, being supportive and believing in us.”	Interviewee 15 (I.15)

Table 24: References to Family Support

## Theme Two: The Never-Failing Entrepreneur

### 8. Failing Experiences

#### Personal Experiences

References to Failure	Quotation	Source
<b>Personal Experiences</b>	“I started doing these workshops, in 2008...This is where the first failure happened, my friend told me it was my way of putting it together...These workshops really, really, they failed at the beginning...”	Interviewee 4 (I.4)
	“As a business owner, actually, I was an entrepreneur, but if you put the definition of sustainability, if you put financial profit, if you put all of this, I failed. If you focus on the creative, on the innovative, on the catalytic, I can say I can...”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	“That was how I started my entrepreneurship journey. It took me about six or seven years. I think 2012, we closed down the business because of these issues, because of the lack of access to funding.”	Interviewee 9 (I.9)
	“It was an experience. I closed, and I regret it a bit, but it wasn’t worth it. It was taking me away from my coaching, from my group work, from my training, I was so overwhelmed by logistics...And of course, the house and the kids...I wasn’t enjoying anything...or the kids, or my coaching clients. I was lost. I was burnt out. I decided to close it.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“I ended it this year and then moved on to my next. I left only because I wanted to venture out on my own. I didn’t feel like I was growing as a person nor did I feel that the company was growing, as some personal reason, just some of my opinions and perceptions just didn’t take into consideration.”	Interviewee 17 (I.17)

Table 25: References to Failing Experiences – Personal Experiences

## General Experiences

References to Failure	Quotation	Source
General Experiences	<p>“I feel like when you’re a man and you fail, it’s seen as, it’s okay, he’ll get back on his feet...but I haven’t heard any women talking about their failure stories. They’re more careful about what they use their money in and invest in. They’re more careful about making sure that what they’re going to do is going to succeed. They’re not given the feeling that it’s okay if this doesn’t work out.”</p> <p>“Because we’ve just been given the opportunity to succeed, it’s hard for us to be like, it’s okay if I fail because I’ve just been given this opportunity to be a part of this whole narrative...I feel like it’s just harder for example if I’m meeting a bunch of people and I’m sitting down, and this is the first time I meet them, it’s very hard for me to brag about what’ve done.”</p>	Interviewee 6 (I.6)
	<p>“A lot of female entrepreneurs I know left entrepreneurship because they were not able to do it. But the thing is, is that a bad thing or a good thing? If 80% of all entrepreneurs fail, and this is what the statistics say, is it a bad thing that 80% of all female entrepreneurs fail, or does it just feel devastating because we think that some of them should be able to succeed and they’re not given the chance?”</p>	Interviewee 9 (I.9)
	<p>“I think Saudi women are having a very hard time balancing the two roles. I think they’re failing at it badly, even though they don’t need to fail, you can succeed at it all when you pace yourself, and when you give everything its due diligence. It doesn’t have to be either/or. But, our society celebrates that.”</p>	Interviewee 5 (I.5)
	<p>“Now, the challenge is for these women to really prove themselves, because they’re at the forefront and at the frontline of everything. Therefore, they need to succeed. They have no choice but to succeed, because they’ve been put in that position. If they fail, it’s failure to all women sadly.”</p>	Interviewee 8 (I.8)

Table 26: References to Failing Experiences – General Experiences

## Failure and Entrepreneurship

References to Failure	Quotation	Source
<b>Failure and Entrepreneurship</b>	“Entrepreneurship is also a mindset. It’s accepting failures, recovering, restarting a thousand times every day.”	Interviewee 10 (I.10)
	“I think as an entrepreneur you always have to know that it might not work, and that’s okay. If your idea doesn’t work, you’re not failing. You’ve actually accomplished something that no one else did. I think that’s an added layer to entrepreneurship that if it doesn’t work, it’s okay.”	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	“I’m not saying that you won’t fail, you definitely will and that’s part of the process and actually if you don’t fail then I don’t really consider you as an entrepreneur.”	Interviewee 17 (I.17)
	<p>“Even the best entrepreneurs suffer from...burnout, from imbalance...”</p> <p>“This could be one of the challenges that faces them, but it’s not necessarily a handicap. It’s a challenge that needs to be overcome just like the challenge of, for example, one business idea failing, and she bounces back to get back to the other one. The entrepreneurs are resilient in that. They do fall. They do break their head, but they stand back up.”</p>	Interviewee 8 (I.8)

Table 27: References to Failing Experiences – Failure and Entrepreneurship

## 9. Success Bias

### Achievements

References to Success	Quotation	Source
Achievements	“Alsalem recently made it into the top 10 of the 2019 “Forbes” 30 under 30 Middle East list, which features the youth changing the world and inspiring their generation.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“It’s this fierce attitude that has gotten her over 33,000 Instagram followers and helped her found her own luxury consulting firm, Niche Arabia.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“This, in addition to her master’s in Business Administration and also being awarded the distinction of the “Top Team Leader in the Class of 2015” by Alfaisal University’s College of Business...”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Her name is on everyone’s lips since she won the 2015 Saudi Arabia’s ‘EY Entrepreneur of the Year’ award.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	<p>“In 2016, she made the 100 Most Influential Arab Personalities list in Arabian Business magazine and was honored by King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for her voluntary work with Al-Jehad Organization. In 2014, Al Ubaid was chosen by Google as its ambassador for Saudi universities...”</p> <p>“She has acquired several local and international awards to date, including first place at an International Piano Competition, and the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) Award in 2016.”</p> <p>“Ekrami ... is winner of a number of programs and awards including the TV program Khawater 8, Youth Business Expo (2012), and Made by My Hands Expo (2013).”</p>	<i>About Her</i> magazine

Table 28: References to Success Bias – Achievements

## Exceptionality/Uniqueness

References to Success	Quotation	Source
<b>Exceptionality/Uniqueness</b>	“Amongst this growing pool of exceptional and boundary-breaking figures is Bayan Linjawi, an entrepreneur, social media influencer, and founder of Blossom MENA.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Saudi art entrepreneur Najla AlBassam is the genius behind Haya Design Studio and Kartt & Co.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Jumana Al Darwish is a mother and businesswoman who puts zero limitations on her capabilities to achieve anything she sets her mind to.”  “Jumana is an inspirational female powerhouse who knows no limits when it comes to fiercely and consistently achieving her goals and dreams without neglecting her family.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Lateefa Alwalaan is a force to be reckoned with. The young entrepreneur is the founder and CEO of Yattooq, a fresh innovative Arabic coffee startup.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Today, Beautybox is one of the leading brands in the natural/organic section in hypermarkets and departmental stores throughout the Middle East.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine

Table 29: References to Success Bias – Exceptionality/Uniqueness

## 10. References to Creativity

### As Associated with a Field/Job Position/Business

References to Creativity	Quotation	Source
<b>As Associated with a Field/Job Position/Business</b>	“Nurturing a mere once-upon-a-time passion has landed her as founder of two creative design studios today.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“In addition to her master’s in Business Administration and also being awarded the distinction of the “Top Team Leader in the Class of 2015” by Alfaisal University’s College of Business make for an ideal combination between her passions for both commerce and creativity.”	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	“Exhibiting designs is part of the creative process.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – December 2017
	“...empowering creatives to invest in their talents.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – March 2018
	“Who will benefit: Local creatives, who get to be a part of a community, get exposure for their work...”	
	“So, the next generation was really more of the creative that came out and was starting to do more in the arts, and those kinds of things. It was more the "leisure" industry.”	Interviewee 1 (I.1)
	“I was the creative in creating a program.”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	“We work well together whether it’s on the creative front or the establishing a business plan and doing the research that we needed to do...”	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	“Marsali...promotes local artists as it collaborates with them for creative products.”	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – January 2016

Table 30: References to Creativity – As Associated with a Field/Job Position/Business



### As an Entrepreneurial Trait

References to Creativity	Quotation	Source
As an Entrepreneurial Trait	<p>“I’m one of those ADHD creative types, who needs to feel challenged or else I get easily bored. I love that I can push the boundaries...”</p> <p>“Being an entrepreneur, you often need to think outside the box. How to execute something with a start-up budget is always a good exercise in creativity. Or taking a business model and tweaking it to have more unique selling points. Those all require a type of creative mind to solve.”</p>	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	<p>[Characteristics to be an entrepreneur] “Resilience, diplomacy, on spot creative thinking...”</p>	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	<p>“The first thing we learn is that entrepreneurs are creative people who build the business.”</p> <p>“An entrepreneur who has a creative sense.”</p>	Interviewee 8 (I.8)

Table 31: References to Creativity – As an Entrepreneurial Trait

### As a Skill/Talent/Sense

References to Creativity	Quotation	Source
As a Skill/Talent/Sense	"...our ethos is the promotion of happiness and positive change, family bonding and instilling the love of art and creativity amongst children and community members."	<i>About Her</i> magazine
	"Huna Art has directly created a creative community where people discuss and learn things every time."	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> – April 2016
	"Inspire creative talent and provide a platform for creativity and creative discourse both in Saudi Arabia and around the world." "The competition is open to everyone in hopes of inspiring people to engage with their creative side."	<i>Destination Jeddah</i> –November 2016
	"I think I'm very creative. I like building things with my hands. I did decide in order to fulfil my creative void that I was feeling for a while, I started decorating cakes, so I do cake decorating as well as anything artistic really."  "I'm more of a creative person, and I really enjoy just taking it easy, building things, making things, painting..."	Interviewee 13 (I.13)
	Is creativity a mysterious force or a superhuman talent that certain people have? Talent and creativity are a divine gift...but without care, attention, motivation and support it fades. Creativity is not a mysterious force...it is obtained through study and learning, and it grows when you find the right care and attention. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i>
	Her creative sense and enormous ability to connect with her traditions, religion, education, and dreams...they become ambassadors for creativity in several countries. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i>

Table 32: References to Creativity – As a Skill/Talent/Sense

### As Associated with Novelty/Ideation/Innovation

References to Creativity	Quotation	Source
<b>As Associated with Novelty/Ideation/Innovation</b>	“I always wanted to go differently and beyond, created things that weren’t created, within the parameters of the title...”	Interviewee 8 (I.8)
	[An entrepreneur] should be a creative thinker, and able to create, innovate, inspire and renew. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i>
	Capable of what I possess in terms of thought, creativity and scientific wealth. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i>
	Young people come up with creative ideas in the field of apps and intelligence. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i>
	This is the realm of creativity, which is related to complex matters... independence of thought and being out of the ordinary even in the simplest way. (Translation from Arabic)	<i>Entrepreneurs KSA</i>

Table 33: References to Creativity – As Associated with Novelty/Ideation/Innovation

## Appendix G

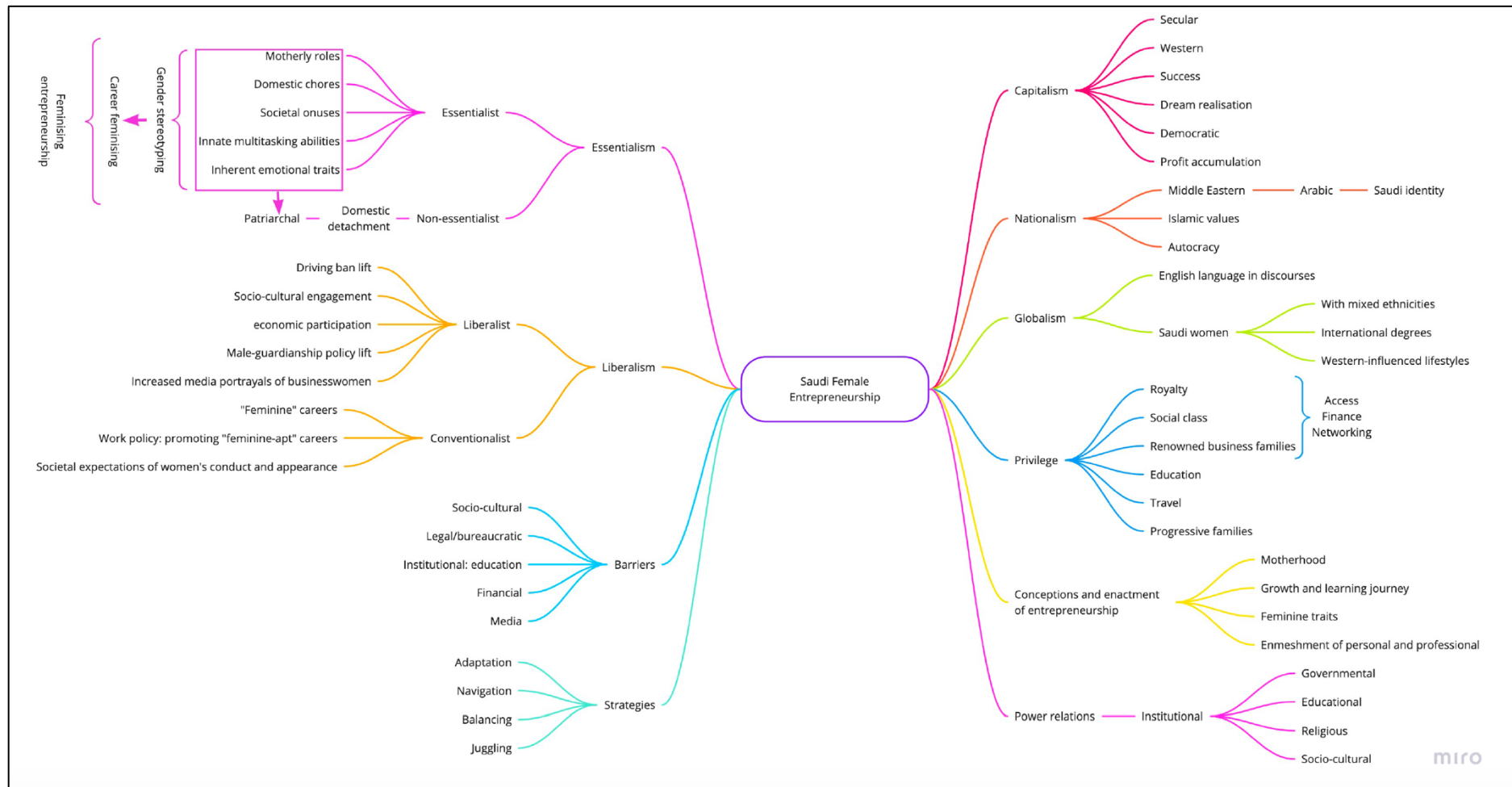


Figure 11: The Paradoxes Shaping Female Entrepreneurship in KSA (enlarged image) (Created by the author)